Yesterday's News

From the pages of the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* and *Harvard Magazine*

1935 The Business School announces 10 new courses on the business aspects of public administration for students who wish to prepare themselves for public service.

1950 The Massachusetts Legislature again considers a bill to investigate Communist sympathizers on college campuses. President Conant assures state lawmakers that Harvard is anti-Communist and has nothing to hide; he deems the investigation unnecessary because it "is likely to expose loyal citizens to unfair insinuations and thus to cause serious injustice."

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Dunster House residents lament their reputation as the "neglected child of Harvard," assuring the *Bulletin* that they are no farther from the Yard than some other Houses, though they do "lie a goodly distance away from the pinball machines and hamburger heavens of Harvard Square."

1960 The Admissions Office blanches at the prospect of 5,000 applicants to the class of '64 as the "wartime 'baby bulge' [appears] a year ahead of schedule." [Applications for the class of 2013 hit 29,112.]

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The first women to complete a formal WHRB comp begin their stints on the air.

1965 The Data and Mailing Services, a computer facility for handling biographical and statistical data on 161,000 alumni, faculty and staff members, and students, has opened, compressing information once stored on many separate stencils onto 16,800 feet of magnetic tape.

1970 In his annual report, President Nathan M. Pusey laments "a dismal year," plagued by student uprisings of "would-be revolutionaries" as well as financial constraints; for the first time in many years, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences runs a deficit, and federal support to Harvard decreases by $200,000.

1980 President Derek C. Bok calls student careerism "a passing phase," predicting "a leveling in the number of future applicants to Harvard—though still far more than there are places available—and less anxiety over becoming a doctor or lawyer."

Illustration by Mark Steele

A key point of the report is that information systems will need to be standardized and improved. When the online HOLLIS circulation system was developed in the late 1980s, data requirements were set by individual libraries, so that data are "not consistent across the collection," says Lamberth. "That is an area that will have to be addressed, to allow us to more fully participate in outside consortial endeavors such as Borrow Direct," the interlibrary loan system used by the rest of the Ivy League. John G. Palfrey VII, a professor and Ess Librarian at Harvard Law School, who chaired the task force's technology working group, says that new technologies "need to become a driver of collaboration across the University's many libraries and beyond," rather than an inhibitor of working together. Harvard's libraries, he says, faced with an historic moment of transformation, can serve researchers everywhere "more effectively and efficiently than we do today if we play our cards right with respect to technology integration and development."

Collaborations that don't require integration have begun already: for example, China's national library is paying to digitize some of the rarest holdings in the Harvard Yenching Library. And Harvard is reportedly far along in talks with MIT (already a Harvard Depository client) on how the two institutions' libraries could work together. (Cornell and Columbia's libraries have announced a Mellon Foundation-funded plan to try sharing collections and the cost of digitization, for example. But collection-sharing will require improvements to Harvard's library data systems.)

More students are using the libraries than ever, says Darnton, and not just from their rooms via computer: "their bodies are also present in the buildings." The future is digital, he says—"That much we know. Meanwhile, we occupy what I refer to as a transitional phase... in which printed works and digital works must coexist and be mutually reinforcing. The digital future is exhilarating, and will enable us to open up the Harvard libraries and share our intellectual wealth. Part of me says, 'Eureka!' because it is the most exciting thing imaginable for a library. But then the other side of me crashes into a reality determined by the budget," and the "distastrous last year" when acquisitions fell "precipitously."

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