

Yesterday's News

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

1932 The Harvard Hall bell is moved to the top of the just-completed spire of Memorial Church. “Nearly everyone who enters or leaves Sever these days walks with neck craned,” report the editors. “As yet no accidents have been reported, but unintentional embraces are sometimes narrowly averted.”

1942 The campus Radio Network conducts a survey of its summer-school undergraduate listeners. Besides learning that more than half the students listen to the station at least twice a week and prefer classical music, investigators also discover that “one-third of all undergraduates study without their trousers.”

1947 Bulldozers invade the Yard a day after Commencement and begin scooping out a hole, next to the soon-to-be-relocated Dana-Palmer House, for the foundations of the future Lamont Library. Estimated building cost: \$1.5 million.

1957 In his Phi Beta Kappa oration, Nieman Fellow Louis M. Lyons calls the press “a very American institution. It has a large element of violence. The instinct of our press is against the government,

unless the government happens to be Republican.”

1962 An “overzealous truckman” consigns 1,700 postal ballots from the Overseers’ and alumni directors’ elections to the city dump before they can be counted. After careful study of the 22,439 ballots remaining, the statistics department concludes that the chance of the highest defeated candidate overtaking the lowest winning candidate is less than one in a thousand, so the incomplete results are allowed to stand.

1977 More than 2,000 Cambridge “Golden Agers” enjoy the second annual Senior Picnic in Harvard Yard, jointly sponsored by the University and the city. President Derek Bok is the most popular dance partner.

1997 The mayor of Boston, Thomas M. Menino, is incensed by the University’s “total arrogance” when a Harvard official notifies the Boston Redevelopment Authority on June 10 that “Harvard has acquired options to purchase 14 Allston parcels, totaling 52 acres, and [is] in the process of taking ownership.”

FAS’s new policy does not change professors’ allowed activities. These are, as before, described in the so-called “Grey Book” (the compilation of principles and policies governing “research, instruction, and other professional activities,” which awaits updating to incorporate the new conflicts-of-interest language). For instance, a faculty member can be on a company’s advisory board, but cannot actively serve in management. With faculty members disclosing all their pertinent outside interests now, Fitzgerald and Griffin are in the middle of determining what kinds of potential conflicts may arise. Based on experiences at other schools, they said, 90 percent of covered faculty members will have *no* potential conflicts.

Griffin cited some quotidian, and perhaps surprising, examples of potential conflicts, compared to straightforward questions governing research grants or investments. What happens when a faculty member requires his own textbook for a course? Appropriate mitigation might include pointing that out to students clearly, early in the course; donating royalties to a charity; or having peers certify that it is the most appropriate book for the class. More subtly, what happens if a publisher discovers a faculty member’s lesson plan for another scholar’s text, and contracts with her to write a study guide to be published for the next edition? Or if a humanities teacher in a course with a long reading list assigns many titles from one publisher, boosting its sales and potentially affecting his future contracts or royalties?

As the reporting began, Griffin noted, faculty members seemed eager to check with peers, to identify issues, to solicit guidance, and to comply with the new policy. “There will be more disclosure” (to the DIO) under the new procedures, Fitzgerald said. “There will be a learning process for the faculty, who had lacked awareness of the old policy—and that’s a good thing.”

