

Dear Members of the Harvard Community:

The ongoing effort to align Harvard's library structure with the University's evolving academic priorities has reached an important milestone. The group tasked with building upon the initial recommendations of the Task Force on University Libraries last fall has finished its work, and I write to share with you their findings and to outline the next steps in this important endeavor.

The Implementation Work Group conducted an exhaustive analysis of our treasured library system and consulted broadly with existing library committees, faculty, students, and administrators to turn the Task Force's recommendations into a high-level blueprint for the flagship research library of the 21st century. That blueprint retains the creative and innovative work already being undertaken throughout our various libraries, and it is structured to build on that foundation to enhance the dynamic capacity of the library system.

The Work Group recommendations, which have been accepted by President Faust and the Harvard Corporation, call for establishing a coordinated management structure for the University's libraries that will balance the need for School-based strategic decisions regarding patron-facing activities with the clear need for a more harmonized approach to the global strategic, administrative, and business processes of our library system. This structural redesign will bring the libraries even closer to curricula across all Schools, allowing librarians to work arm in arm with faculty members to develop course plans that bring into the classroom the best resources that the University can access, from the latest scientific article to a page from Keats' journals. The redesign will also permit cataloging and preservation of materials to be prioritized across the entire collection, and new scholarly materials, which will largely be born in digital formats, to be shared more easily through a sustainable model that would make these materials available for generations of scholars to come. These are just two examples of the possible benefits of a more closely coordinated management structure.

Realizing this vision will not be a simple task, and it will require all of us to work together. The Harvard Library collections are among the University's greatest resources. It is a testament to the dedication and stature of our remarkable library staff that our University library system has remained pre-eminent despite the fragmentation that was well-documented both by the Task Force and the Implementation Work Group. The world of information has shifted dramatically, however, and many of the decentralized aspects of our system that facilitated Harvard's remarkable "collection of collections" are now straining our ability to meet our patrons' needs. In an era in which scholars regularly cross disciplinary boundaries, employ remarkably diverse printed and digital media, and expect the most advanced tools for search and analysis, it is critical that we develop a more unified and nimble structure for decision-making.

While many details of the new management and organizational structure will be

finalized in the coming year, this much is known for certain: The new Harvard Library will be overseen by a single Library Board consisting of faculty and deans, and chaired by the provost. The membership of the initial Library Board, which will shepherd the restructuring process, will be announced shortly. This board will be responsible for overseeing the overall transition process, consulting with stakeholders, and providing critical input into the design of the new management structure to ensure that it meets the University's overall needs and maintains the library's scholarly pre-eminence.

One of the first tasks for the Library Board will be to appoint an Executive Director for Harvard Library, who will have overall management responsibilities for the new library system. Robert Darnton, Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor and current Director of the Harvard University Library, and Nancy Cline, Roy E. Larsen Librarian of Harvard College, will assist the new Executive Director in getting started and then transition into new roles over the next year. The Pforzheimer University Professor will take a lead position in representing the faculties of the University on the Library Board. To provide further assistance in the transition, a project management team will be formed to support the board and Executive Director. The transition and its associated work will begin in earnest next semester.

Throughout this transition, these new leaders will need to think creatively about maximizing access to the existing physical collection and the printed materials that we will continue to acquire. Preserving and conserving our materials, regardless of format, will be a timeless challenge. And with thousands of new titles entering circulation every year, we must develop alliances with other libraries and cultural institutions to ensure full access for Harvard's patrons to the world's scholarly resources.

In the long term, it is our expectation that this new Harvard Library structure will allow the University to reallocate resources and ultimately invest more in collections, increase access to our collections, enhance our library's digital infrastructure, and greatly improve the delivery of services to patrons at the individual facilities or through the library's virtual front door. Ultimately, we envision a Harvard Library that would allow patrons to survey our entire collection through a single digital portal, whether they are standing on the first floor of Widener or connecting with a mobile device from a remote research post a continent away.

By leveraging the power of a coordinated organization, we will be in a stronger position to negotiate with publishers, enter into strategic partnerships with other institutions, and continue to spur innovation throughout the system to develop creative solutions to the challenges posed by the digital age.

As we move ahead to this next crucial phase, I would like to thank David Lamberth, Professor of Philosophy and Theology at Harvard Divinity School, for his leadership

of the Implementation Work Group, as well as all of the members of that committee, for their invaluable service to the libraries.

It is the people who have acquired and maintained our collections throughout the years who deserve the bulk of the credit for the wonder that is the Harvard Library. This period of reinvention will demand the engagement of our talented library staff, and there will be tremendous opportunities for consultation throughout the coming year as we position the Harvard Library for 21st century excellence.

Sincerely,

Steven E. Hyman
Provost, Harvard University

For a related Q&A on this statement, please visit: <http://hvd.gs/67648>