

HARVARD UNION (from Scrapbooks in computer)

"Place of meetings--In view of the fact that the Harvard Travellers Club could no longer qualify for membership in the Harvard Union under the Union's new regulations, new quarters must be found in which to hold the meetings of the H.T.C. The Executive Committee recommended that we should make use of private houses, the Boston Natural History Society's rooms, and through the courtesy of Dr. Dixon the Club was given opportunity to meet at the Colonial Club. ..."
(Fellows Meeting minutes, October 28, 1904. Book1 p67 item92)

"A special meeting of the Harvard Travellers Club will be held in the Trophy Room, Harvard Union, Cambridge, at 12.30 o'clock, Thursday, March 31, in honor of Sir Ernest Shackleton, who will be a guest of the Club.

Luncheon will be served at one o'clock, prompt. Each member may invite one guest. Those intending to be present are requested to send their check (\$1.50 a cover) to the Secretary not later than Monday, March 28.

At the close of the luncheon the health of our guest will be proposed by President Lowell, and Sir Ernest will reply. At half-past two o'clock the meeting will adjourn to the Living Room of the Union, where the explorer will be greeted by a gathering of students."

(Notice flyer for a special meeting on March 31, 1910 for Sir Ernest Shackleton. Book2 p95 item150)

There's a caricature drawing of Shackleton. The concluding paragraph of the article: "Sir Ernest spoke yesterday afternoon before an enthusiastic audience of Harvard students at the Harvard Union. The Travellers' Club of the university gave him a luncheon before the address. About 80 attended including Prof. W.M. Davis, toastmaster; President Lowell, J.D. Greene, secretary of the corporation, and Joseph Warren."

(Newspaper clipping appearing on 1 April 1910 reporting Shackleton's talk. Title: Shackleton tells Boston of his search for South Pole. Book2 p95 item151)

SOURCE: <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/1997/09.11/BarkerCenterDed.html>

Barker Center Dedicated Tomorrow

By Debra Bradley Ruder

For years, the English Department at Harvard was scattered in several buildings around campus. The undergraduate program was in one place, graduate studies was in another, and creative writing was somewhere else. Graduate students had no place to hang their hats, and space was so tight that many faculty didn't have offices in the department at all. This fragmentation meant that faculty members were cut off from everyday, chance encounters with their students or with each other.

Until now, that is.

For the first time in recent memory, the English Department is consolidated under one roof, along with 11 other humanities departments and units, in the new Barker Center for the humanities. It occupies three floors of the Center, which opened this summer after 15 months of construction and a decade of planning.

The Center encompasses three historic buildings -- including the Harvard Union -- and contains office, study, teaching, and meeting space, as well as a relandscaped central courtyard.

Harvard will formally dedicate the Robert and Elizabeth Barker Center at 12 Quincy St. on Friday, Sept. 12. The celebration will run from 4 to 6 p.m. and include an open house and reception.

"The Barker Center provides many humanities departments with a splendid and central home, an improvement that affirms our commitment to the traditions of liberal education," said Jeremy R. Knowles, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS).

"More than 90 faculty, more than 100 teaching fellows, and the staff of 12 departments and centers come together in a place that will surely give a new vibrancy to both teaching and research in the humanities at Harvard."

The \$25 million Barker Center project was designed to improve the environment for teaching and research and to enhance collaboration in the humanities by bringing many of the departments together in a group of distinguished but underused buildings: the Harvard Union (a 1901 McKim, Mead & White structure), Burr Hall (its 1911 addition), and the nearby Warren House (an early-19th-century house). Boylston Hall, in the Yard, is also part of the humanities complex.

The effort will boost Harvard's position in the drive to recruit top faculty and graduate students, and it will send a signal to the academic community about the importance of the humanities here.

A Long-Awaited Project

Planning for the project began back in 1987, after an analysis of FAS buildings underscored the space shortages and physical fragmentation that had occurred in the

humanities for decades as academic fields divided, programs multiplied, and interdisciplinary studies blossomed.

Planners turned to two deteriorating and centrally located buildings -- the Harvard Union and Memorial Hall -- to address these problems. The Union (and Burr/Warren House) were ideally located because of their proximity to Widener Library and to other humanities departments already in or near Harvard Yard.

The first part of the project involved moving the dining hall for first-year students from the Union to Memorial Hall, a Victorian landmark that had served as a student dining center until the 1920s and which has been revitalized. The two adaptive reuse projects eventually became priorities for the University's \$2.1 billion campaign.

The humanities project involved an unprecedented amount of consultation with the Harvard community, and the design and configuration changed considerably with input from faculty, staff, students, architects, and historic preservation experts.

The Union renovation continues Harvard's successful record of restoring and adapting its buildings, including the freshman dormitories, Busch Hall (the Center for European Studies), and Memorial Hall.

Among the challenges for architects Goody, Clancy & Associates of Boston was to transform a building that focused entirely upon a few grand rooms to one whose great spaces were open to and shared equally by occupants of all five floors.

To achieve this, the architects reshaped the center of the Harvard Union to create a grand, skylit stair hall connecting departments throughout to large seminar rooms, a parlor/lounge, and a café in the rotunda.

The Barker Center as a whole contains more than 170 offices, 32 seminar/meeting rooms, departmental lounges, a computer room for graduate students, a central copy center, and the café operated by C'est Bon.

The exteriors of these neo-Georgian turn-of-the-century edifices have been repaired and restored with minimal new additions to preserve their historic character. Some dormers have been added, and the buildings have been made handicapped accessible.

The interiors, although reconfigured to fit the new programs, retain and reuse many of the original materials, details, and artifacts--from carved oak paneling to massive stone fireplaces and an unusual antler chandelier.

Warren House, a clapboard house that originally stood on the site of the Union, was upgraded with new mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, as well as fresh paint and improved lighting.

"I think it's one of the most unusual buildings at Harvard," said Elizabeth Randall, Barker Center project manager. "It has so many components of a 19th-century home, like a cistern, a large metal bathtub that Professor Warren had installed, and beautiful old hardware. We discovered that it was not on the National Register of Historic Places, so we put it up for nomination, and now it is listed."

The general contractor for the Barker project was Shawmut Design and Construction of Boston.

Occupying the Barker Center are: Afro-American Studies; the W.E.B. Du Bois

Institute; History of American Civilization; Celtic Languages and Literatures; Center for Literary and Cultural Studies; English and American Literature and Language; Folklore and Mythology; Germanic Languages and Literatures; History and Literature; Study of Religion; Slavic Languages and Literatures; and Women's Studies.

Another five humanities departments -- Classics, Comparative Literature, Linguistics, Literature, and Romance Languages and Literatures -- will occupy Boylston Hall after it is renovated. That project is slated to begin construction in January.

Positive Reviews

Faculty, staff, and students are still settling into the Barker Center and becoming accustomed to the space configurations and the new administrative systems. So far, the reviews are positive.

"The offices are great. They're well-lit and very comfortable, and I think we will run into each other more freely," said Leo Damrosch, Ernest Bernbaum Professor of Literature. "I can't emphasize enough how good it is to have a café where you can bump into someone and have a cup of coffee."

Damrosch's office used to be in Warren House, while other parts of the English Department were on Prescott Street, Kirkland Street, and in Grays Hall. Undergraduates are now more likely to cross paths with faculty, "and the graduate students have lockers, which is an incredible improvement," he said. "They used to have to lug their belongings around."

"We're all impressed by the high quality of the workmanship and the imaginative design," he continued. "The architects worked closely with us throughout the project, and we really appreciated being able to help shape the spaces we'll be living in."

The new address also has many advantages for Professor Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, who has a joint appointment in the FAS and in the Divinity School, and whose interests cut across history, religion, African-American studies, and women's studies.

She is pleased that Afro-American Studies is reunited with the Du Bois Institute, and that it has regained its library, which had been converted to an office at its previous location on Massachusetts Avenue. The Barker Center also has seminar and meeting rooms that accommodate different types of gatherings.

From a practical standpoint, the new spot is more convenient for Higginbotham, who has colleagues and graduate students in various FAS departments and whose travel between buildings has been reduced considerably.

Afro-American Studies, she noted, is now physically connected to the humanities. "American Civilization is next door, English is down the hall, the Committee on the Study of Religion is upstairs, and History and Literature is downstairs," she said. "It's wonderful for Afro-American Studies to really be a part of the larger academic institution."



NEG NO: 146 FRAME: 11A DATE: 9/02

VIEW: Interior, former Union, Harvard University.

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