Proximity to skilled graduates and the concentration of research attracts business investments, such as pharmaceutical research centers now being built in Boston and Cambridge by Merck and Novartis, respectively. Through licensing, direct support, incubator space, faculty involvement in startups, training in entrepreneurship, and real-estate development, the universities encourage commercial use of academic discoveries and the birth of new enterprises.

*Engines of Economic Growth* also examines the universities as a major regional industry in themselves. At the end of 2002, they employed, all told, more than 50,000 people—including 2,000 hired during the two previous years, even as metropolitan Boston shed some 58,000 jobs due to the downturn in financial services and technology. Local purchases total more than $1.3 billion per year. Construction on the eight campuses—for laboratories, housing, and other facilities—might total as much as $850 million annually in the next four years, an important counterweight to moribund commercial projects.

Looking ahead, the report returns to its sponsors’ introductory theme. Despite “increases in productivity” resulting from use of information technology, research remains a “space-intensive activity. Real growth in the universities’ research enterprise will over time require the development of additional space.” Even allowing for renovation and more intensive development of existing properties, “universities will sometimes need to build new facilities outside the historic boundaries of their campuses.” To that end, both the institutions and the economy of their home communities would “benefit from the creation of a framework that simultaneously respects local concerns and allows the institutions to respond quickly to emerging needs and opportunities.”

**Speak Memory**

“Here I am, an old man in a dry month. Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain,” said T.S. Eliot ’10 into the microphone. He was giving a reading at Sanders Theatre and making the first recording—of his poems “Gerontion” and “The Hollow Men”—on the Harvard Vocarium label.

Launched in 1931 (in collaboration with Harvard’s Poetry Room, the Harvard Film Service, and the English Department) by Frederick C. Packard Jr. ’20, a Harvard professor of public speaking much interested in recording voices, the Harvard Vocarium label persisted through the early 1950s. Dozens of poets and other writers read their works, among them Tennessee Williams, W.H. Auden, Robinson Jeffers, Marianne Moore, Archibald MacLeish, Theodore Roethke, Muriel Rukeyser, and Robert Lowell. Meant to foster the “appreciation of literature,” the phonograph records were sold to the public and have been in continuous use at Harvard by students and researchers. About 110 records were made, according to Donald Share, present curator of the Woodberry Poetry Room in Lamont Library.

The entire corpus has been chosen by the Library of Congress for inclusion in the first annual selection of recordings for the National Recording Registry. “Congress created the registry to celebrate the richness and variety of our audio legacy,” says Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. The inaugural set of 50 recordings emphasizes, he says, “important firsts in the history of recording in America: technical, musical, and cultural achievements.”

The Vocarium series shares registry honors with such landmark items as 1890 field recordings of Passamaquoddy Indians, Caruso singing “Vesti la giubba” from Pagliacci in 1907, vaudevillian DeWolf Hopper reciting “Casey at the Bat” in 1915, Bessie Smith singing “Down-Hearted Blues” in 1923, and the first radio-broadcast version, in 1938, of Abbott and Costello’s “Who’s on First.” Elvis is on there, of course. (For the entire list, go to www.loc.gov/rr/record/nrpb/nrpb-nrr.html.)

“The actual artifacts—the cylinders, discs, piano rolls—are at the heart of the registry,” says Share. “Preserving, restoring, and digitizing them, and then storing the results in a permanently safe place, ensures the future survival of these priceless and unique recordings.” The Library of Congress won’t re-release any of the recordings in the registry commercially, but the recordings will be available to the American people on site and perhaps to some extent on-line if copyrights permit.

The poetry room has almost 60 years of similar recordings not on the Vocarium label. A core part of that collection is to be restored and digitized, thanks to Rob Hildreth ’72. “The result will be on-line access to our recordings, which are now accessed only on site,” Share says. “So, we’ve got two wonderful projects underway to restore and reformat our unparalleled audio collections.”