Yesterday’s News
From the pages of the Harvard Alumni Bulletin and Harvard Magazine

1922 Professional waiters will be employed this year in the dining-room of the Harvard Union. For the past three years that work has been done by students, but the management believes the change will be economical. Breakfasts will cost 30 to 65 cents, luncheon, 65 cents, and dinner, 90 cents.

1932 Although the “business depression” prompts Harvard to allocate $40,000 for part-time jobs for 200 to 300 students, Herbert Hoover carries the College (1,211 votes) in the Crimson’s early presidential poll. The Alumni Bulletin attributes Norman Thomas’s strong showing (484 to FDR’s 620) to “an extraordinary increase of independent thinking among the students.”

1937 Harvard receives a $764,114 bequest from Mrs. Lucius W. Nieman, widow of the publisher of the Milwaukee Journal, “to promote and elevate standards of journalism in the United States.”

1942 The Fogg Museum sponsors a course in industrial and civilian camouflage...The Law School’s enrollment drops from 1,500 to 165.

1952 Harvard begins the largest financial-aid program in its history, allocating almost $1 million in scholarships, loans, and jobs for more than one-third of the undergraduate body.

1972 The Courses of Instruction includes for the first time a course in Vietnamese.

1982 Allston Burr Hall is demolished to make room for an addition to the Fogg Art Museum amid a flurry of other construction activity, including the remodeling of Lowell and Winthrop Houses and the extension of the Red Line subway tunnel northward. “Everywhere one walked, progress was afoot,” report the editors. “This was the summer of our discombobulation.”

Designating Dunster

Harvard announced in mid July that Dunster will become the first of its 12 residential undergraduate Houses to be fully renewed under an ambitious, multidecade program. (Renovating the River Houses alone is expected to cost more than $1 billion.) Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) dean Michael D. Smith and Harvard College dean Evelynn M. Hammonds said that under the plan, which needs approval from the Harvard Corporation, Dunster—the smallest of the neo-Georgian Houses along the Charles—would be out of service for 15 months (one academic year and the bracketing summers) in order to complete the project. Work is slated to begin in June 2014.

Dunster residents would be housed temporarily at the Inn at Harvard and in nearby University-owned apartment buildings for the 2014-2015 academic year. The Inn, constructed in 1991, was built for use as a hotel until needed for other University purposes. It will close by July 2013 to be refitted with student beds, a dining hall, and other social and program spaces integral to every House.

Planning for the massive project of renovating the Houses began in 2007, when administrators noted that a system originally designed to accommodate 3,900 students was housing 4,900, forcing many undergraduates to live in suites’ common rooms or in nearby apartments. A consulting firm hired to analyze the Houses noted that aging mechanical systems (including plumbing, ventilation, and electricity), most dating to the 1930s but some more than 100 years old, would need to be replaced. Planners also expect to address fire-safety issues and bathroom access that requires bedroom walkthroughs. Their goal is to use existing space more efficiently in order to house more students more sustainably.

Because the role of the Houses had not been thoroughly reexamined since the first seven were built during a three-year period in the...
1930s, administrators also undertook an extensive review of that subject [see “What Makes (and Remakes) a House,” July-August 2008, page 66], examining everything touching on the Houses’ mission and purpose, ranging from academic and social matters to the responsibilities of masters, deans, tutors, staff, and senior common-room members, and the services and resources a House should provide. Committees reviewed public spaces such as libraries, technology labs, and recreational spaces to determine which are essential to every House and which might be shared among Houses.

Other groups considered how residential living spaces enhance students’ learning, health, and well-being. Their recommendations were used to draft guidelines for the planning and architecture of the renovations, which ultimately led to a strategic and financial plan.

“Our commitment to providing an unparalleled liberal arts education and student experience in a residential setting is unwavering,” Smith stated in the official announcement about Dunster. Harvard, he said, will apply the lessons learned from the test projects at Old Quincy (under way) and Leverett House’s McKinlock Hall (slated to begin next summer) as it begins planning for Dunster’s renewal. Achieving that goal, in turn, will furnish FAS and the College with additional data before the renovation of a second House begins during 2016 and 2017.

THE UNDERGRADUATE

Summer Reflections

by Cherone Duggan ’14

Despite having spent countless hours on the Internet, there is only one Google search I distinctly remember making. One day, when I lived at home in Ireland, I was so utterly and completely fed up with school that I typed “summer abroad” into Google and pressed Enter. I was hoping that a beautiful montage of interesting language programs and exotic backpacking destinations would flood my computer screen, transporting me, if only momentarily, away from the gloomy Irish day and my debilitating boredom into a world of beautiful colors and accented whispers. No such montage materialized.

Instead, something quite different appeared as the first search result. I clicked it. I read. I thought about what I read. The program described sounded good. I applied. I went. I loved it. I returned home, grew more maddened by the Irish educational system, decided to leave it, and left. And, in leaving, changed the entire trajectory of my life.

The link I clicked that fateful day directed me to Harvard Summer School’s Secondary School Program website. I clicked it toward the end of my sophomore year of high school—called “Transition Year” in Ireland, designed to allow students to take some time off from the humdrum curriculum in order to “personally develop.” In my school, this “personal development” came only in very specific, structured packages, neatly wrapped and presented to us in the form of starting our own mini-companies, performing at an annual show, taking random classes in self-defense, drama, and first aid, selling charity badges to strangers on the streets of Dublin, and very little else that I can remember.

The general idea of the Year is for students to escape from the overly exam-focused system: in Ireland, our entire pre-collegiate education boils down to the preparation for, and results of, two sets of examinations—the first, when you’re about 14, the second, at the very end of senior year. The results of the second set are the only criteria for college admissions. Everything else is just a test run; your whole secondary-school education comes down to two weeks of exams at the very end. No essays, no extracurriculars, no school transcripts, no recommendations—just making State Examination grades. The End is all that matters. You are merely an examination number, with no face and no background, just a