A Very Special Collection: Inside Harvard’s Houghton Library

Eyes Wide Open: Art Critic Michael Kimmelman on “Accidental” Masterpieces

Jenny Hoffman: A Physicist Returns to Harvard

New Writing by Harvard Faculty: Steven Biel, Thomas Forrest Kelly, and Marc Shell

Alumni Books
A Very Special Collection
Inside Harvard's Houghton Library, a charming repository for books, manuscripts, and ephemera of Emily Dickinson, Samuel Johnson, New Directions authors, John Keats, and other literary and cultural icons.

Lab Building: A Young Physicist Returns to Harvard
How Professor Jenny Hoffman is building her lab from the ground up, and finding life at Harvard is quite different on the teaching side of the fence.

Eyes Wide Open

New Writing by Harvard Faculty
Excerpts from new books on American Gothic, by historian Steven Biel; opening nights at the opera, by musicologist Thomas Forrest Kelly; and a memoir of the polio years, by literary scholar Marc Shell.

News and Notes
Keep up with new scientific discoveries, accolades received, current scholarship, and transitions of notable Graduate School alumni and Harvard faculty, both on campus and off.

Alumni Books
A potpourri of intellectual riches… A look at the art of the Japanese doll, modern Chinese filmmaking, flower power during the reign of Louis XIV, the spiritual lives of American teenagers, and much more.

Corrections: In the summer 2005 issue of Colloquy, photos of two Harvard faculty members were reversed. On page 17, the photo caption referring to psychologist Richard McNally portrays sociologist Martin Whyte, while the photo caption on page 19 referring to Whyte is of McNally. We appreciate the good humor of Professors McNally and Whyte regarding this error. Also, we erred in the Alumni Note for Peter Viereck. Professor Viereck is, of course, a principal theorist of modern conservatism. Thanks to an astute reader for noticing our principle/principal mix-up.

On the cover: The Emily Dickinson Room at Harvard’s Houghton Library features a replica of the poet’s own writing room, including the actual desk and chair where she worked, the bureau in which her poems were discovered after her death, and a portrait of Dickinson as a girl with her brother and sister. Photo courtesy of the Houghton Library.
A New Era for the Graduate School

I want to thank former Alumni Council Chair Dr. See-Yan Lin for introducing me to readers in the summer issue of Colloquy, and I want to thank Peter T. Ellison, the John Cowles professor of anthropology and my predecessor as dean of the Graduate School, for his dedication and years of service to GSAS.

As I look ahead to the coming months and years, I will be carrying on the good work of former GSAS deans to improve the intellectual lives of our students and engage with our alumni.

It is very important to me to increase faculty awareness of what is going on in graduate education and to build faculty support, not just for what’s going on in one particular department or program, but for the whole Graduate School.

One of my major goals is to increase faculty involvement in the governance of the Graduate School. Toward that end, I will recommend the creation of a graduate policy committee. This would in some ways be parallel to the educational policy committee that oversees undergraduate education at Harvard.

It is very important to me to increase faculty awareness of what is going on in graduate education and to build faculty support, not just for one particular department or program but for the whole Graduate School. Things work better when faculty are involved and they see the big picture, not just their individual piece of it.

The committee would comprise approximately ten faculty members, with an emphasis on those who have had some history of thinking creatively about graduate education at Harvard and who come from a variety of departments and programs, both within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and in our growing interfaculty programs.

The committee would address key issues such as time to degree, mentoring, and the training of graduate students for teaching. It’s the responsibility of the GSAS staff and the dean to make proposals, but it would be very good as well to get feedback and ideas from a group of faculty who understand the conditions in different graduate programs. Whenever there’s a major policy change, I think it should be discussed.

Another of my priorities is to move forward with securing resources for fully funding all students’ dissertation years in a way that encourages excellence and facilitates the prompt advancement of graduate students to the PhD.

I will also ask departments to reflect on their mentoring of graduate students and how they are helping students move through the stages of their program. Obviously, programs vary, and students don’t all have the same needs, so a one-size-fits-all approach is not feasible.

But we must think about how students make the transition from taking courses to thinking of themselves as independent scholars. This transition happens more readily in some programs than in others, and we should highlight “best practices” and spread them to new areas.

As the academic year progresses, I hope to meet many of you at chapter events held throughout the United States and, this year, in India, as well as next spring at our annual Alumni Day and first-ever reunion for alumni of the Division of Medical Sciences.!
A Very Special Collection:

A VISIT TO THE
HOUGHTON LIBRARY

BY SUSAN LUMENELLO

BUILT IN 1942, THE HOUGHTON LIBRARY STANDS TODAY AS A LIVING REPOSITORY OF RARE AND IMPORTANT BOOKS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND GRAPHIC ARTS, AND HOME TO PRIZED COLLECTIONS OF AND ABOUT THEATER HISTORY, SAMUEL JOHNSON, JOHN KEATS, EMILY DICKINSON, AND OTHER CULTURAL ICONS AND SCHOLARLY SUBJECTS. ITS RELATIVELY MODEST HOME—A BOWED BRICK STRUCTURE IN HARVARD YARD—STANDS IN CONTRAST TO THE INTELLECTUAL RICHES HOUSED WITHIN IT.
The collection contains 500,000 rare books with strengths in humanities and philosophy. There are more than 10 million manuscripts as well, some thousands of years old, including early and illuminated manuscripts, but with an emphasis on Colonial American and European writings. Extensive holdings in printing and graphic arts include calligraphic manuscripts, illustrated books from across the centuries, and architectural drawings.

Some of the millions of items held by the Houghton include letters Ernest Hemingway wrote to a friend during the 1950s with his comments on literature, baseball, and boxing, among other subjects; and letters and manuscripts of Lewis Carroll.

The Houghton Library also comprises Harvard’s marvelous Theater Collection, one of the world’s great collections on the history of theater, dance, opera, and musicals; and the Theodore Roosevelt Collection, which includes writings from throughout the 26th president’s life.

Houghton director William Stoneman, the Florence Farrington librarian, has been at the Houghton since 1998. He described the library’s acquisitions program as “aggressive.” “We acquire material every week,” he said, referring to manuscripts, rare books, prints, photographs, and other items. Material is acquired according to its perceived research value.

“Part of the challenge is being good stewards and knowing how to handle photographs, medieval manuscripts, early printed books, paper documents, and the like—and having the expertise to make it available to the...scholarly community at Harvard and around the world,” Stoneman said.

This means that Stoneman and his staff are continually witnessing trends in scholarship. “From our point of view as librarians, Emily Dickinson seems to be perennially popular. People keep coming to work on Emily Dickinson. Keats has gone kind of up and down, though we suspect he may be on the way up again,” he said. For instance, Stoneman noted that when Harvard’s Stephen Greenblatt published Will in the World, his much-lauded book on Shakespeare, interest in that subject area spiked.

MAJOR ACQUISITIONS
The Houghton has attracted attention in recent years for two major acquisitions in particular.

The Hyde Collection came to the Houghton in 2004 and is arguably the greatest gathering of Samuel Johnson–related objects in the world. Assembled over a 60-year period by Donald and Mary Hyde, who later became Viscountess Eccles, the collection comprises first editions and manuscripts, including several drafts of Johnson’s “Plan for a Dictionary” and part of his diary. There are also portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds and personal objects such as Johnson’s teapot.

Stoneman said he believes that the collection will come to be used “heavily” for the writings of Mary Hyde Eccles herself, who held a PhD and documented her scholarly and collecting life across decades. “I’m very proud that the Hyde bequest came in during the period I’ve been librarian,” Stoneman said. “That was something that a number of my predecessors worked on. The fact that it came to Harvard is a great coup.”

In 1997, the Houghton received from publisher James Laughlin the New Directions collection. Laughlin founded New Directions as a Harvard undergraduate in the 1930s, and it has been known ever since as a publisher of avant-garde and modernist literature. The New Directions collection consists of Laughlin’s correspondence with authors such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, and of galley proofs with authors’ notations from Paul Bowles, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and William Carlos Williams, among many others.

INTELLECTUAL RICHES
The Houghton Library also includes some rooms that, while small in square footage, hold intellectual riches in abundance.

The Amy Lowell Room is named for the great poet who gave the Houghton her entire personal library as well as an impressive collection of annotated manuscripts, including many belonging to John Keats, a Lowell favorite.

“Amy Lowell was interested in poets and authors and their creative effort,” said Stoneman. “She wanted people to be able to see the manuscripts and to understand the human being behind the author and to watch them at work as best you can. So that’s what she did, she gave her library and her papers and a bequest to continue buying for the collection.” Upcoming exhibitions in the Lowell Room feature objects on Sherlock Holmes (November) and Hans Christian Andersen (December).

The Emily Dickinson Room is actually two rooms, one of which is a replica of the bedroom in which the poet worked. This includes Dickinson’s actual writing desk, not much larger than a plant stand, and chair, as well as the bureau from the Dickinson homestead in which the cache of her hand-sewn fascicles (booklets) containing most of her work were found.

An adjacent room holds an astonishing array of antiquarian and otherwise singular books and manuscripts, including

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In a clean and brightly lit machine shop tucked in the basement of the Engineering Sciences Lab, manager Louie DeFeo points to a series of round brass and steel disks propped up on a filing cabinet. The Frisbee-sized plates, some with holes measuring less than 1/100th of an inch, look like a series of intricately crafted Mandalas.
“That’s for Jenny’s lab,” DeFeo says, referring to Jenny Hoffman, who joined the faculty as an assistant professor of physics last January. He unfolds a three-dimensional diagram of the completed project: a low temperature, high-magnetic field scanning tunneling microscope (STM for short).

Invented in 1981 by two IBM engineers, an STM allows researchers to image the topography of surfaces with atomic resolution, measure the energy levels of the constituent electrons, and even manipulate a material atom by atom. Hoffman’s customized version of the tool, a mere inch-and-a-half tall, will take two skilled machinists over 100 hours to build (not including the cooling unit, nicknamed “the fridge”). And that’s just phase one of the “California ended up being fantastic. I got into the ultrarunning community: a great earth-friendly group doing crazy long runs,” she says.

Ultrarunners tackle 50- and 100-mile trips across the rough desert and mountain terrain of the West. On her personal Website, Hoffman posts notes on the dozens of off-road adventures she and husband Daniel Larson, who teaches and works on curriculum review at Harvard, have completed. The duo has traversed much of the East coast as well, completing a 320-mile hike on the Appalachian trail and climbing most of the 4,000-foot peaks in New England.

Her dedication to an active life neatly parallels her research agenda, a blend of basic and ambitious applied physics. On the basic side, she studies organic superconductors—materials that allow the flow of electric current without the loss of energy at temperatures near absolute zero. “Superconductivity at 1.5 Kelvin [about -450 °F] is something no one in the real world would care about yet,” she explains. “But it makes for fascinating physics. Where else can you find one-dimensional electrons!”

On the applied side, Hoffman plans to use her STM to investigate the properties of electrons in yttrium barium copper oxide (YBCO), a high-temperature superconductor. Unlike most superconducting materials, YBCO uses common liquid nitrogen, not the more expensive liquid helium, as its coolant, making it ideal for small, lightweight power systems such as those in boats and aircraft. The trick to making the compound ready for broader commercial use is finding (and fixing) any mechanisms that can lead to energy loss.

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Comparative Literature
Maria Louise Ascher, PhD ’97, informs us that her translation of Johnny Chen Méchant, by the Congolese author Emmanuel Dongala, was published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in May 2005. Dongala’s novel, released in English under the title Johnny Mad Dog, tells of two teenagers living in an African country that is being torn apart by civil war. It is a coming-of-age story, a tale of survival, and a portrait of the chaos that afflicts many regions of Africa.

English and American Literature
E. San Juan Jr., PhD ’65, reports that he served as a visiting professor of literature at National Tsing Hua University (Taiwan) in December 2004. Previously, he was Fulbright professor of American studies at the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium). Professor San Juan’s book Working Through the Contradictions: From Cultural Theory to Critical Practice was published by Bucknell University Press in 2004. He is director of the Philippines Cultural Studies Center in Storrs, Conn.

Geological Sciences
Rushdi Said, PhD ’50, recently published a memoir, Science and Politics in Egypt: A Life’s Journey (The American University in Cairo Press), of his life and work. Said was a leading geologist and a government official in Egypt, and he outlines that country’s modern political history from an insider’s perspective. In February 2005, Said received an honorary doctorate degree of science from the American University in Cairo.

History
Elizabeth Makowski, AM ’77, reports that she has been promoted to full professor at Texas State University in San Marcos. Her latest book, A Pernicious Sort of Woman: Quasi Religious Women and Canan Lawyers in the Later Middle Ages, was published by Catholic University Press this year.

History and East Asian Languages

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EYES WIDE OPEN

Michael Kimmelman Finds Beauty in the Unexpected and the Familiar

BY SUSAN LUMENELLO

In the introduction to his new book, The Accidental Masterpiece: On the Art of Life and Vice Versa, Michael Kimmelman (AM ‘82, fine arts, GSA ’86) writes that the essays that follow concern “some of my own points of contact with things greater than myself.” This rather humble statement is characteristic of Kimmelman’s open-minded approach to art criticism, which he began writing for the New York Times back in 1988. He was made the paper’s chief art critic in 1990. Kimmelman spoke recently with Colloquy about Accidental Masterpiece and the thinking that led to it.

Michael Kimmelman’s book Portraits: Talking with Artists at the Met, the Modern, the Louvre, and Elsewhere (1998) was selected as a New York Times Notable Book of the Year and as a best book of the year by Publisher’s Weekly. Kimmelman was a finalist in criticism for the Pulitzer Prize in 2000.

The book seems almost a celebration of a humble approach to art-making and art-viewing, perhaps even a protest against the cult of art and celebrity.

MICHAEL KIMMELMAN: I had come to feel as I did my job over the years that my own ways of looking at the world had been changed by looking at art. I knew how much I—like other people—look to art for ideas and for pleasure, to be challenged and to be touched. It sounds now rather corny because much of the discussion about art has been so specialized. I suppose that’s what you mean in a way about this book being a response to a lot of writing about art and, in general, about visual culture.

So I wanted to restore what I thought was a very traditional way of looking at cultural writing, which is in the context of narrative story-telling, like biography, but without doing a straight biography. A kind of humane, philosophical musing that would reconnect with what I think was a kind of great amateur tradition of art writing. The fact that there were many wonderful writers who looked to art as a subject in the past, like Proust, seemed to me something that has to some extent been lost as the field, like so many cultural disciplines, has become academic and has become the province of specialists.

Millions of people go to museums. Apparently, more of them go to museums than go to ballgames, and they’re clearly looking for something. They’re looking to find connections with things...they expect to have meaning in their lives. I think they’re often frustrated by the feeling that...there are things they’re supposed to know that are obscure to them and not made easily available.

For instance, there’s a chapter about conceptual art and earth art (Ed.: earth art uses materials found in nature, such as
Robert Smithson’s Spiri t jetty (1970) is one of the more noteworthy examples of “earth art.” More than a thousand feet long, it extends into the northeast shore of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Though today it is often underwater, it can be seen when the lake is dry. Writes Kimmelman: “The landscape is littered with a few rusting cars and a decrepit pier, not far from Smithson’s jetty, the contrast between eternal nature and manmade decay being part of the artist’s motivating philosophy, although nature overwhelms everything, including the detritus and, finally, Smithson’s art.”

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Colloquy regularly presents excerpts from new books written by Harvard faculty in the arts and sciences. In this issue, you’ll find recent work by historian Steven Biel, musicologist Thomas Forrest Kelly, and literary scholar Marc Shell. — The editor

“Iconoclasm”
By Steven Biel
Steven Biel, PhD ’90, is a senior lecturer on history and literature, and is director of studies for the Committee on Degrees in History and Literature.


An Iowa farmwife, irate over American Gothic, told [painter] Grant Wood, by one account, that he should have his “head bashed in.” Wood remembered the threat as only a bit less violent, without the emphatic “in.” Another vowed to bite off his ear. “I saw a trim white cottage, with a trim white porch—a cottage built on several Gothic lines,” he recalled in a 1933 interview.

This gave me an idea. That idea was to find two people who, by their severely straight-laced characters, would fit into such a home. I looked about among the folks I knew around my home town, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, but could find none among the farmers—for the cottage was to be a farmer’s home. I finally induced my own maiden sister to pose and had her comb her hair straight down her ears, with a severely plain part in the middle. The next job was to find a man to represent the husband. My quest finally narrowed down to the local dentist, who reluctantly consented to pose. I sent to a Chicago mail order house for the prim, colonial print apron my sister wears and for the trim, spotless overalls the dentist has on. I posed them side by side with the dentist holding stiffly upright in his right hand a three-tined pitchfork. The trim, white cottage appears over their shoulders in the background.

When the picture was printed in the newspapers, I received a storm of protest from Iowa farm wives because they thought I was caricaturing them. …

American Gothic’s indelibility was born in controversy.

“Richard Wagner, Das Rheingold: Bayreuth, August 13, 1876, 7:00 P.M.”
By Thomas Forrest Kelly
Thomas Forrest Kelly (PhD ’73) is the Morton B. Knafel professor of music.


For some reason there are opera lovers who do not love Wagner, and there are others for whom Wagner is the only composer worth listening to. It is certainly true that Wagner is the most discussed opera composer who has ever lived. Much of his influence began during his own lifetime, but the later effects of Wagner’s music on that of others, and perhaps more importantly the use and misuse of his music by the National Socialist Party in Germany, have made his operas, and to some extent his world-view, a matter of continuing controversy. Wagner as a man was a hero to the Nazis, owing mostly to his virulent anti-Semitic writings and to the ideology he built up around himself. But in his time he was seen as a genius, and as a musician he is nothing short of a genius.

…A combination of inappropriate complaining in print and active participation in an 1849 uprising in Dresden got Wagner exiled, and he spent a number of years in Switzerland (he returned to Germany only in 1860). In his banishment he read widely, and he befriended the philologist and philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who for a time was among his strongest supporters. He also wrote some of the literary pieces that are a sort of position paper for his later operatic works: “The Artwork of the Future” and “Opera and Drama,” in which he envisioned a drama arising from the German people, based on myth, and reuniting the arts. (The trend in these years toward German unification gave his writings a special resonance.) And he conceived the Ring.

Wagner imagined a work called Siegfrieds Tod in 1848, and he envisioned a temporary wooden theater for its production as a music festival, at the end of which the theater would be pulled down. The original work gradually expanded to three evenings with a prelude, and by 1852 the text was complete (though none of the music was written). By early 1854, Wagner had printed a version of the text of the whole Ring and had drafted all the music of
During the first years after he has contracted the disease, the polio generally believes that he falls into this second category. He is a survivor, no matter how scarred by polio. The terrible suffering and the temperately complete recovery—many are described in [Edmund] Sass’s Polio’s Oral Legacy—became passers of an extreme sort. These passers keep their having had polio—or, if you prefer, their being polios—a secret from other people. In most cases, they also kept it a secret from themselves. Nancy Carter Baldwin thus writes in her Myths and Chicken Feet:

For most of us, resolving physical problems was the first order of business after we had polio. We wanted to get on with it. We worked out ways to do what needed to be done and charged into life. Before long these ingenious substitutions for the way “normies” do things became routine, and we began to think of ourselves as one of the gang.

In fact, several researchers...still like to say (falsely) that people adopted one of three social and psychological strategies of coping with having had polio and surviving the experience. Polios in the first group pass as if they had never had polio—as if they were fully recovered. Those in the second group minimize their having had polio. Those in the third group identify as being polios.

Polios who believed in tales of complete recovery—many are described in [Edmund] Sass’s Polio’s Oral Legacy—became passers of an extreme sort. These passers keep their having had polio—or, if you prefer, their being polios—a secret from other people. In most cases, they also kept it a secret from themselves. Nancy Carter Baldwin thus writes in her Myths and Chicken Feet:

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In fact, many of us got so good at the charade that we fooled ourselves. 

Where does the polio survivor fit in? During the first years after he has contracted the disease, the polio generally believes that he falls into this second category. He is a survivor, no matter how scarred by polio. The terrible suffering and the temperately complete recovery—many are described in [Edmund] Sass’s Polio’s Oral Legacy—became passers of an extreme sort. These passers keep their having had polio—or, if you prefer, their being polios—a secret from other people. In most cases, they also kept it a secret from themselves. Nancy Carter Baldwin thus writes in her Myths and Chicken Feet:

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lives in the humanities

bravery and much independence, and it is perhaps not coincidental that several of the bravest and most independent modern artists who come to mind are women.” Why is that?

MK: I think that it’s not coincidental that it has taken an extra strength of will and extra dedication by many women to make art when often people are not willing to take them seriously. Charlotte Salomon is a perfect example of that. She lived under special circumstances (Ed.: Salomon was an artist, largely undiscovered, who died in Auschwitz in 1943 at age 26 but left Life? or Theater?, a 1,300-page diary with text and paintings) nonetheless, her act of making this huge, extraordinarily creative, messy, but profound thing was done with no support at all, and I think that was an incredibly heroic thing to do.

I think Jay DeFeo’s act, too, is a great strength (Ed.: In the 1960s, DeFeo created The Rose, an approximately one-ton, wall-sized painting on which she spent much of her adult life). The art world has changed a great deal in the last ten years or so. It’s a much more equitable place in terms of men and women, not across the board, but in general, especially among young artists. It hasn’t always been so, of course, so I thought [of] a chapter about a heroic effort to throw oneself into the process of making art and, hopefully, of making something much larger than oneself—which is, in the end, why all art is made.

Does it trouble you that, despite the numbers of people who go to art museums, contemporary art is not a mass medium? When people line up for an exhibition it usually is for a show of Impressionism rather than for contemporary work.

MK: I want to answer that question carefully because art has no requirement to be popular. It has no requirement to explain itself to everyone, and its quality should not be judged on the number of people who go to a museum to see it. I think the numbers of people going to museums do tell us that people are looking for something from art. But I think it’s dangerous then to use those numbers to determine which art is important and which art is not.

You’re right that obviously people will go to Monet and may not go so much to the Sol LeWitt show, and that’s okay. Sol LeWitt does not have a requirement to be as popular or as accessible as Monet or Desperate Housewives.

I do think that...for a combination of reasons—some of them intellectual, some of them commercial—the art world has isolated the experience of contemporary art in such a way that a public that might actually find it more moving and meaningful than they think, are led to believe that it’s not really for them. That it’s obscure, technical, off-putting, and that they have to know a great deal of history and theory to even begin to approach it. I mean, art is elitist, and that’s a good thing, but, as a colleague of mine once said, it’s an equal-opportunity elitist: anyone can appreciate it.

But I think that the desire is there to connect with some kind of human expressions that are deeper and more complicated and interesting than the ones we are served up on television, through pop music, and so forth. And the art world—and to some extent the academic art world too—has not always done a good job at making these things understandable and meaningful to an educated, interested public.

Reading the chapter “The Art of the Pilgrimage,” I wondered about getting to see some of these works that you saw, such as Robert Smithson’s Spiral Jetty: “6,650 tons of black basalt and earth in the shape of a coil” in Utah.

MK: You can see Spiral Jetty or go to Marfa [the site of Donald Judd’s massive installation in West Texas]. You have to make the effort; it’s not an easy thing to do. In the book I include some of the criticisms of these projects: that they’re very expensive, that they’re very far away, and that very few people can [visit them].

But that gets back to my earlier point, which is that art is not like electricity; there’s no obligation to provide it to everybody. The Sistine Chapel is only in one place, and you have to get yourself to Rome to view it, and that’s not Michelangelo’s fault.
In 2005, DaVinci’s Mona Lisa was moved to a larger room in the Louvre to better accommodate its millions of annual visitors. Although Kimmelman finds it “a sublime painting,” he says that many tourists experience disappointment upon seeing Mona Lisa in person. “When nothing is truly strange or foreign any longer,” he writes, “everything having been predigested, we then demand to be shocked, shock being an experience that still seems genuine to us.”

Some of these things, though, are not yet accessible. This isn’t a guidebook to art; it’s a discussion of the experiences I had, and the process of going to them can be had by going to other places too. I went to Colmar [France] to see Grünewald’s Isenheim altarpiece; that’s how [the chapter] starts, and that’s quite accessible, but most people don’t make the effort. But you can see Spiral Jetty. You have to get out to Salt Lake City, and it’s best to have a guide. To get to Marfa, you have to get to El Paso and then drive for hours and hours.

These [works of art] are intended to be obscure, partly because I think [the artists] want people to have the experience that people used to have with art, which was that there weren’t museums and you’d have to go out of your way to see something special. You’d spend time with it. People used to also draw and copy [which] was a way of physically embedding the image and the experience in you when you saw something. Now we either buy a postcard or a book, or we figure we’ll get it on the Web, or we take a snapshot. That idea of ease of access has also caused us to look [at art] a little less closely.

In the chapter “The Art of Having a Lofty Perspective,” you talk about the anticlimax many people experience when seeing the Mona Lisa in person. Is there something else that those viewers can do to experience the sublime? Is that an instance in which you’re suggesting that they climb a mountain, or draw, or go out to see Spiral Jetty to achieve what they thought they were going to feel when they went to see the famous painting?

MK: What I’m trying to say is that you may not experience things the way people tell you that you should, and that’s perfectly okay. One has to be open to different kinds of experiences and to look for yourself. It sounds like a banal thing to say, but it’s so hard to do. I think that is, in many ways, the hardest thing for people, even very smart people, with material that they have been indoctrinated to believe requires special knowledge. Just opening their eyes and trying to figure out what they’re looking at is very hard. You have to get through lots of layers of doubt and other things.

The Mona Lisa is a great painting precisely because people come to it with all sorts of expectations and maybe with the fear that they won’t get the thing that they’re supposed to get. They rarely do find it quite as moving as they had hoped, or had been told that they were supposed to find it.

So, I’m suggesting that there are many things that can be deeply moving, deeply profound, and they can be found in all sorts of places, certainly in great art... but also in other places too, not just on a mountaintop.

“THE ART OF HAVING A LOFTY PERSPECTIVE”


If, like most people, you have ever walked into a museum or gallery or looked at a picture in a magazine or newspaper and wondered how anything so ugly and lacking in taste had come to be considered art, you might recall the moment in 1917 when Marcel Duchamp acquired a porcelain urinal from a plumbing equipment manufacturer on lower Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, signed it “R. Mutt,” and submitted the now infamous Fountain to the Society of Independent Artists exhibition, in which any artist who paid a small fee could participate. The society, as he no doubt expected, found the urinal beyond the pale.

“You mean to say, if a man sent in horse manure glued to a canvas that we would have to accept it?” asked the artist George Bellows.

“I’m afraid we would,” replied Walter Arensberg, Duchamp’s patron and champion, who had shopped with him for Fountain...

... It was a challenge to the very idea of sculpture, which had until then been a representation of an object, a man-made transformation of material into an illusion, a spiritual adventure. The readymade was, well, just what it looked like. A urinal was a urinal. It didn’t stand for anything else. And to grasp its meaning involved no special discrimination of taste, as traditional sculptures did. Duchamp had replaced the art of discrimination with art by designation. “I declare this snow shovel to be a work of art,” he said, and so it was. Who was to say it wasn’t? But for that matter, if someone were to say the shovel was beautiful, who was he to deny it?

Such became the world of modern art.
HARVARD TEAM MAKES ADVANCES IN STEM CELL RESEARCH

Led by Douglas Melton, the Thomas Dudley Cabot professor of the natural sciences, a team of Harvard scientists has fused an adult skin cell with an embryonic stem cell in a potentially dramatic development that could lead to the creation of useful stem cells, it was reported by the Associated Press in August 2005. According to the report, early research showed that the fused cell “was reprogrammed to its embryonic state”—which was one of the major hurdles scientists had faced.

This means that hybrid cells can theoretically be used to produce embryonic stem cell lines that are tailored to individual patients without the need to create and destroy human embryos—the process at the heart of the stem cell controversy. The Harvard researchers used laboratory-grown human embryonic stem cells—such as the ones that President Bush has already approved for use by federally funded researchers—to essentially convert a skin cell into an embryonic stem cell. Stem cells have been cited by scientists as crucial to possibly treating a variety of human diseases. The research was published in the August 26 issue of Science.

LONGTIME GSAA COUNCIL MEMBER DIES

Ishier Jacobson, SM ’47, mechanical engineering, LLB ’51, died July 20, 2005, in Connecticut. A World War II veteran, Jacobson was a retired public utility executive. He began working at Citizens Utilities Company, headquartered in Stamford, Connecticut, in 1954, and became its president and CEO. He also chaired the Silver Hill Hospital, a leading psychiatric hospital; served as director of Centex Telemangement, Inc., and Vermont Electric Power Company; and chaired the Connecticut Ballet. Jacobson’s service to GSAS has been extensive in years, variety, and dedication. He served as a member of the Graduate School Alumni Association (GSAA) Council since the 1980s, chairing the group twice. He was a member of the Alumni Advisory Committee on Dudley House and the Executive Committee of the Graduate School Fund, and he represented the Graduate School’s interests as a Harvard Alumni Association Appointed Director for four years and as vice president for Graduate School Affairs of the Harvard Club of Fairfield County.

ALUMNI FACULTY HELPING TO SPIKE SARS

Stephen C. Harrison (PhD ’86, biophysics), professor of biological chemistry and molecular pharmacology, led a team of researchers who have produced the first detailed molecular images of a piece of the spike-shaped protein that the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) virus uses to grab host cells and initiate the first stages of infection.

The structure, which shows how the spike protein grasps its receptor, may help scientists learn new details about how the virus infects cells. The information could also be helpful in identifying potential weak points that can be exploited by novel antiviral drugs or vaccines.

SARS was responsible for a worldwide outbreak in 2002–03 that affected more than 8,000 people and killed 774 before being brought under control. Public health experts worry about another outbreak, which originates in animals such as civet cats. Harrison and Medical School professor Michael Farzan (PhD ’97, medical sciences) reported their team’s findings in a September 2005 issue of Science.

EXHIBITIONS AT THE HARVARD ART MUSEUMS

Alumni planning to be in the Cambridge area may want to stop by one or all of the University’s art museums. The Fogg Art Museum is showing A New Kind of Historical Evidence: Photographs from the Carpenter Center Collection, through October 30, 2005. The images reflect a range of uses of the medium, including documentary and art photography. The Sackler Museum is showing Degas at Harvard, through November 27, 2005. This exhibition brings together more than 60 works by Degas and is organized thematically into sections of portraits, landscapes, ballet scenes, batters, and horse scenes. Finally, also at the Sackler, is a show on historical decorative arts, Silver and Shawls: India, Europe, and the Colonial Art Market, through January 29, 2006. Admission is free to University ID holders. For more information about these and other museums offerings, call 617-495-9400 or visit www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

“GENIUS” GRANTS TO GSAS ALUMNI

Three of the 25 new MacArthur fellows, announced in September 2005, are GSAS alumni. Pehr Harbury (AB ’86, PhD ’94, medical sciences) is a biochemist at Stanford University; Nicole King (PhD ’99, biology) is a molecular biologist at the University of California at Berkeley; and Michael Manga (PhD ’94, geophysical sciences) is a geophysicist, also at Berkeley. Each fellow receives $500,000 in “no-strings-attached” support over the next five years. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation began making these grants in 1981 to recognize “highly creative people working across a wide spectrum of activity.”

YOUNG PHYSICIST WINS GRIBOV MEDAL

Matias Zaldarriaga, a professor of astronomy, won the Grivob Medal in July 2005 from the European Physical Society. The prize is given every two years to a young physicist (under age 35) for outstanding work performed in the field of theoretical particle physics and/or field theory. Zaldarriaga’s area of research is theoretical astrophysics with an emphasis in cosmology.
It’s not often that Harvard faculty collaborate on writing books, and it is even rarer to find faculty across departments joining forces for publication. But it has happened. Christie McDonald, chair of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures and the Smith professor of the French language and literature, has gathered several colleagues for a retrospective look at the work of artist and ethnographer Anne Eisner.

Eisner, an American painter, left a promising artistic career in New York City to move to the former Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) in 1946. She had fallen in love with “maverick” anthropologist Patrick Putnam, and they married and lived in a rain forest village from the late 1940s through the early 1950s; Eisner later visited the region after Putnam’s death. Images of Congo: Anne Eisner’s Art and Ethnography examines Eisner’s paintings from an art historical perspective and also looks at how art and life informed her book Madami: My Eight Years Among the Pygmies, published in 1954. Anne Eisner Putnam died in New York in 1967 at age 56.

McDonald, who is Eisner’s niece, received her aunt’s papers in the 1980s. She gave the archive, including drawings and photographs, to Harvard’s Houghton Library (see page 2 of this issue for an article on the library).

In his preface to Images of Congo, F. Abiola Irele, who teaches in the departments of African and African American studies and of Romance languages and literatures, wrote: “We can only speculate upon the directions her art would have taken if she had remained in Africa, or if she had been granted more years of life. But the work that she left behind has an enduring importance. For the fact that Anne Eisner recorded her experience in the Congo rain forest not only in words, but in the symbolic mode of art—projecting this experience in the double perspective of text and image—lends her work a special significance for the study of culture, which ultimately rests on the capacity for understanding.”

Also contributing to the book is Suzanne Preston Blier, the Allen Whitehill Clowes chair of fine arts and of African and African American studies, who writes on commonalities between Eisner’s canvases and Mbuti bark cloth.

Kay Kaufman Shelemay, the G. Gordon Watts professor of music and professor of African and African American studies, explores Eisner’s paintings of music performance and her writings about the importance of music to the Pygmy community in which she lived.

McDonald herself contributes an essay on ethnography, literature, and art, focusing on how Eisner, as a woman and a Westerner, was both constrained and liberated in this colonial setting.

—Compiled by Susan Lumenello
BEWARE THE WINNER’S CURSE
Victories That Can Sink You and Your Company
By G. Anandalingam, PhD ’81, applied sciences,
and Henry C. Lucas Jr.

The curse in question is an economist’s term, coined during the “roaring 1990s” to refer to the results of overvaluing a financial decision, whether it is hiring an executive or acquiring another company. Here, the authors discuss the psychological and market factors that lead to these ultimately bad decisions, as illustrated recently by such companies as Tyco and MCI-WorldCom. Anandalingam is the Ralph J. Tyser professor at the University of Maryland’s Smith School of Business.

CULTIVATED POWER
Flowers, Culture, and Politics in the Reign of Louis XIV
By Elizabeth Hyde, PhD ’98, history

Hyde argues that flowers in exalted palace garden settings wielded such power over a king that their cultivation and promotion served to move forward French culture, politics, and even views of masculinity. The author teaches early modern European history at the College of New Jersey.

HEARING BACH’S PASSIONS
By Daniel R. Melamed, AB ’82, PhD ’89, music

Johann Sebastian Bach’s two surviving passions—St. John and St. Matthew—are performed regularly today, but not many listeners know the historical context and significance of these works. Melamed’s insights offer a new way of hearing the passions today. Melamed is an associate professor of music at Indiana University and an authority on Bach.

NINGYO
The Art of the Japanese Doll
By Alan Scott Pate, AM ’90, regional studies—East Asia

“A beautiful, complex, and little-known world” is how Pate describes the cultural phenomenon of Edo-period dolls and figurines. Richly illustrated with dozens of color plates, this book explores the history and significance of “palace dolls,” dolls for girls and boys, the doll as talisman, and theater using these dolls. Pate is an independent scholar and an authority on Japanese dolls and antiques.

REINVENTING CHINA
A Generation and Its Films
By Paul Clark, PhD ’83, history and East Asian languages

Films such as Ju Dou, Raise the Red Lantern, and Farewell, My Concubine exemplify a new approach to art and to telling stories about China. Clark looks at a community of filmmakers who emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, and their collective and individual political and artistic journeys. Clark, a professor of Chinese at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, is also the author of Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics Since 1949.

THE IRISH ART OF CONTROVERSY
By Lucy McDiarmid, PhD ’72, English and American literature and language

From the late-19th century through much of the 20th, five key controversies helped shape Irish national identity, writes McDiarmid. These included George Bernard Shaw’s defense of the Abbey Theater, the “Save the Dublin Kiddies” campaign, and the matter of patriot Roger Casement’s “perversion.” McDiarmid notes, interestingly, that these and other such controversies boiled up during times of peace but receded during times of war and conflict. The author is a professor of English at Villanova University. Her previous books include Auden’s Apologies for Poetry (1990).
STALKING THE RIEMANN HYPOTHESIS
The Quest to Find the Hidden Law of Prime Numbers

By Dan Rockmore, PhD ’89, mathematics

Each year, a prize of $1 million is offered to the person who can solve the Riemann hypothesis, one of the great mathematical puzzles. It has yet to be solved—though Rockmore says the solution may be close—and it has stymied mathematicians since the mid-19th century. Bernhard Riemann of the University of Göttingen proposed in 1859 a key to understanding prime numbers (those that are only divisible by one and themselves) having to do with the number zero and a geometric pattern. Riemann died shortly after making this dramatic declaration and was unable to produce proof for it. Hundreds are still trying. The author is a professor of mathematics and computer science at Dartmouth College.

THE FUTURE WITHOUT A PAST
The Humanities in a Technological Society

By John Paul Russo, AB ’65, PhD ’69, English and American literature and language

Western culture is currently undergoing a major transition that finds its origins in the mass popularization of the personal computer and other high-tech tools that first appeared in the 1980s, according to Russo. “Western humanism has declined to the point of irrelevance,” he writes, and then explains how and why our values and approach to humanities have so changed. The author is a professor of English at the University of Miami. His previous books include I.A. Richards: His Life and Work (1989).

STOIC WARRIORS
The Ancient Philosophy Behind the Military Mind

By Nancy Sherman, PhD ’82, philosophy

Sherman shows how an ancient philosophy—Stoicism—has infused the minds of modern-day soldiers in regard to injuries, being hostages and hostage-takers, and postwar grief and rage, among other phenomena of combat. The author is a University professor of philosophy at Georgetown University. Her previous books include Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue (1997).

SOUL SEARCHING
The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers

By Christian Smith, Div’84, Ph.D ’90, sociology; with Melinda Lundquist Denton

This book, based on the results of the wide-ranging National Study of Youth and Religion, debunks some stereotypes about adolescent religious beliefs and finds a trend toward what the authors call “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism,” which defies much traditional religious teaching. Smith is the Stuart Chapin distinguished professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His previous books include Moral, Believing Animals (2003).

—Compiled by Susan Lumenello

drafts of Keats’s poem “To Autumn” and Dickinson’s “254,” otherwise known as “Hope is a thing with feathers”; note-books of Alfred, Lord Tennyson; and Keats’s personal copy of a book of Shakespeare plays featuring the poet’s own handwritten notes.

“People like to see old books even if they can’t touch them,” noted Stoneman. “There’s the antiquity, and the idea that this has been going on a long time can be inspirational.”

Please submit Alumni Notes to: Colloquy, Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Byerly Hall 300, 8 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138-3654; or e-mail your news to gsaa@fas.harvard.edu. Please include your telephone number or e-mail address. Alumni Notes are subject to editing for length and clarity.

Stoicism—has infused the minds of modern-day soldiers in regard to injuries, being hostages and hostage-takers, and postwar grief and rage, among other phenomena of combat. The author is a professor of philosophy at Georgetown University. Her previous books include Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue (1997).
“When you apply a magnetic field, it penetrates in quantized bundles called vortices,” she explains. “A vortex is basically a tornado of electrons. When the vortices move, they cause dissipation—the loss of energy in the material. While the electric current itself is non-dissipative, it will still cause the vortices to flow. We hope to learn more about how to ‘pin’ vortices in place by imaging them with the STM.”

Even for the well-trained Hoffman, unraveling the mysteries of the quantum world and fostering new types of practical superconductors will not be a solo marathon. Having a research team, however, has required tackling a challenge at the larger, human scale: motivating and managing a staff.

THE CEO SCIENTIST
Hoffman supervises seven people (one post doc, three graduate students, two undergraduates, and one high school student) in addition to balancing teaching, administrative duties, and her own work. Unlike in business, management training for new faculty is rare.

“If I were to go and work for a consulting firm, I would receive at least two weeks of basic management training,” she says. “You come in as a professor almost anywhere and receive no formal guidance.” By mixing some Iaccoca in with her Einstein, Hoffman has opted for a bottom-up approach to the art of leadership. Her first decisive act was moving a desk from her faculty office in Lyman to the center of her basement lab in Pierce. In the early stages of setting up a research program, Hoffman has become “everybody to [her] students.” She wants to be where the action is, where her students are.

“I’m in my lab from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. just about every single day, no matter what. The whole day long I jump from student to student answering questions from ‘how do I take this partial derivative’ to ‘how do I program this?’”

She expects the constant yet essential Q&A will ebb as her students, all of whom are new, gain experience, or in business terms, become like middle managers. Fledgling and well-established scientists alike typically need one to two years to organize their teams before any lab starts producing significant research and publishing results. Hoffman, a dedicated teacher and mentor, doesn’t plan to take any shortcuts along the way.

“When you have graduate students you are building their careers. How you interact and what you give to them is going to affect their trajectory for the rest of their lives,” she says. “One of my biggest initial mistakes was not checking in often enough. They needed more feedback. In some sense I wasted several months of their lives. That’s a serious error on my part.”

Hoffman is quick to admit and to correct her missteps, the mark of a good scientist and a responsible manager. She has also learned that running a research enterprise not only takes hands-on coaching but also the passing on of some less obvious lessons.

PRACTICAL PHYSICS
“There’ve been zero times since my freshman year that I have actually had to calculate how fast a ball will roll down an inclined plane,” Hoffman says, with no offense meant towards her past teachers. “What I do need is the ability to make order of magnitude estimates for when I need to buy something like ceramic screws. Are they strong enough? What does a Newton-meter mean in terms I can understand with my hands and a screwdriver? That’s daily life in the lab.”

One of her ongoing goals is to share her mundane experiences and practical wisdom with her students. This is all the more impressive given Hoffman’s stellar credentials (including two papers each in Science and Nature) and her surprisingly young age, 27. Given that her next youngest faculty colleague is nearly ten years her senior, and that even some of her graduate students and post-docs are older than she is, frequent misunderstandings result.

The gold lettering on her door initially read ‘Jenny’ instead of ‘Prof.’ as on the doors of her fellow physics faculty. She has since had the lettering changed, but the addition of the academic title hasn’t changed her. Now, she says with a laugh, “People would knock, look in, and peer around me to ask, ‘Is Professor Hoffman here?’

“I am very willing to admit that I don’t know things. I don’t have the attitude of ‘suddenly I’m a professor and, so, I have to know everything.’” Hoffman says, citing past experience. “My first semester teaching as a graduate student I was scared out of my mind. Standing at the blackboard, I couldn’t even derive the simplest things that I had known since my own freshman year. I felt like I owed my students so much more. So, one hot day I brought in a five-quart bucket of ice cream and said I was ‘starting over.’ It was a bit late to break the ice, but it worked.”

Despite the unexpected bumps and the incredible work ahead needed to get her full research program on track, Hoffman’s kept her sense of humor, balance, and—perhaps unusual at a world-class university—her humility and generosity. What’s certain is her amazing ability to push herself, in the classroom, in the lab, or in a race, and inspire others along the way.

To find out more about Professor Hoffman’s work, visit www.physics.harvard.edu/~jhoffman/ and hoffman.physics.harvard.edu.

Michael Rutter is communications manager at Harvard’s Division of Engineering and Applied Sciences.
When Meg Andrews was searching for a graduate school, she knew it would have to be a place that could accommodate her multiple interests: biology, chemistry, and the physiology of disease. Never one to pursue a single topic, Andrews double-majored in history and biochemistry as an undergraduate at North Carolina State University, where she also studied plants that have been used historically to treat cancer.

Through Harvard’s Biological Sciences in Public Health program, Andrews chose to conduct research in two different laboratories with leading experts from diverse fields: Jon Clardy, professor of biological chemistry and molecular pharmacology at the Medical School, and Dyann Wirth, professor of immunology and infectious disease at the School of Public Health.

“Collaboration is ingrained in science and it’s natural to integrate different fields. Harvard’s program seemed perfect for me,” Andrews says, adding that she intends to use approaches from chemical biology to shed light on potential cures for malaria.

Thanks to the Harvard Integrated Life Sciences Graduate Program (HILS), dozens of students like Andrews express equal satisfaction. HILS coordinates all PhD programs in the life sciences and eliminates barriers constraining students from choosing the best educational path at Harvard by integrating 11 graduate programs across four Harvard Faculties: the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard School of Dental Medicine, Harvard Medical School, and Harvard School of Public Health.

The HILS structure also permits examination of emerging trends in the life sciences, including the need for new degree programs. HILS has already launched two new interdisciplinary programs—chemical biology and systems biology—and intends to introduce a third program in bioengineering.

According to HILS Chair Christopher T. Walsh, the Hamilton Kuhn professor of biological chemistry and molecular pharmacology, Harvard’s life sciences PhD programs have been effective and high quality over time, but HILS creates a sum representing much more than its total parts. Through HILS, students can be exposed to research areas that they may never have considered as well as propose innovative new projects. “Students provoke the conversations that make faculty reconsider their standard assumptions,” Walsh says.

That integration has also made the admission process easier. The HILS Website (www.gsas.harvard.edu/hils/) allows prospective students to compare programs from across the University in one place and apply through a single portal.

Once admitted, students have the choice of moving across Schools with greater ease and flexibility—taking courses in different programs—to find the area of research that seems right for them. As a result, departmental boundaries remain in place administratively and organizationally, but not intellectually.

**STUDENT MOBILITY**

The guiding philosophy of the integrated program aims to provide students with full access to all faculty and training resources within the University that are relevant to their educational needs. Students will enjoy full mobility to rotate through any appropriate laboratory within the life sciences community, and to transfer between programs, where appropriate.

In addition, HILS faculty participation will be open to all qualified faculty regardless of the location of their appointment, thus creating a truly unified, University-wide training program in the life sciences.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINING PROGRAMS**

Seed funding will support new cross-disciplinary training programs, engaging faculty from the Longwood, Cambridge, and, eventually, Allston campuses, as well as drawing on disciplines outside the traditional boundaries of biology. Start-up funds for new programs support faculty involvement and student recruitment before the programs become eligible for federal training grants.

**LIFE SCIENCES FELLOWS**

The HILS Executive Committee will award 12 fellowships each year to the most promising first- and second-year predoctoral students in the life sciences. The fellows are acknowledged as exceptional students and receive an additional $5,000 stipend for three years.

This increase in funding, combined with the prestige of being named a fellow, will give Harvard an added carrot when recruiting students being sought by both national and international competitors.

HILS coordinates all PhD programs in the life sciences and eliminates barriers constraining students from choosing the best educational path at Harvard.
Tuesday, October 18, 2005 | Seattle, Washington
Christoph Wolff, the Adams University Professor in the Department of Music, will speak on “Mendelssohn Rediscovering Bach: Setting the Record Straight.” His recent publications include *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (2000).

Thursday, November 17, 2005 | Chicago, Illinois

Monday, November 21, 2005 | New York, New York
Richard J. Tarrant, Harvard College Professor and the Pope professor of the Latin language and literature, will speak on “Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in Art.” Tarrant is currently preparing a book on Horace’s *Odes*.

Thursday, January 26, 2006 | Santa Barbara, California
Gary Urton, Dumbarton Oaks professor of pre-Columbian studies, will speak on “Deciphering the Knotted-String Records of Ancient Peru.” Urton is an authority on Incan khipu, knotted textiles that were used to communicate and keep records.

Thursday, March 2, 2006 | New York, New York
Mahzarin R. Banaji, the Richard Clarke Cabot professor of social ethics in the Department of Psychology and the Carol K. Pforzheimer professor at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, will speak on “Mind Bugs: The Psychology of Ordinary Prejudice.”

March 25-26, 2006 | New Delhi, India | HAA Global Series: “Harvard Comes to India”

**ALUMNI WEEKEND**
Friday, April 7, 2006 | Boston, Massachusetts
Division of Medical Sciences Alumni Reunion
Be a part of the first-ever reunion for alumni of the Division of Medical Sciences. More information will be mailed early in the coming year.

Saturday, April 8, 2006 | Cambridge, Massachusetts
Alumni Day
Hear from Harvard faculty on their recent scholarship, catch up with old friends, and enjoy a day of intellectual and social refreshment.