

*At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on December 12, 2006,
the following tribute to the life and service of the late William Henry
Bond was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.*

WILLIAM HENRY BOND

BORN: August 14, 1915
DIED: November 18, 2005

William Henry Bond, last of the American scholar-librarians, was born in York, Pennsylvania, on August 14, 1915, only child of Walter Laucks Bond, a manufacturer of pianos, and his wife Ethel Bane (Bossert) Bond. In 1933 he graduated salutatorian from William Penn Senior High School, and A. B. with honors in English, Phi Beta Kappa, from Haverford College in 1937. He came to Harvard as a graduate student in 1938, asking immediately at Widener Library to see Arber's *Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London* and the first edition of John Milton's *Areopagitica*. He earned the Ph.D. in English Philology in 1941 with a reception study of Sir Philip Sidney. The career path he had planned to culminate with a professorship in English Literature had been diverted when he took the seminar in descriptive bibliography under William Jackson, who spotted his natural acumen and sent him down to Wye Plantation on summer break to catalogue the collection of English Literature being formed by Arthur A. Houghton, Jr. Thereafter these three men worked together to house, enrich, index, publish, and open for research the historical collections of books and manuscripts in the College Library: Houghton, brilliant businessman, gifted collector, and architect manqué; Jackson, the greatest book mind of his generation and "Harvard's Grand Acquisitor"; and Bond, the sound scholar-bibliographer, who would fit all the pieces together in dedicated service to his University.

After enjoying research fellowships at the Huntington and Folger libraries he served in the U. S. Navy from 1942 to 1946, cracking codes with the bibliographers Fredson Bowers and Charlton Hinman. (His Japanese dictionary was a souvenir of that adventure.) He returned immediately to Harvard as William Jackson's assistant at the Houghton Library, and in 1952 he took a house in Conantum (Concord), where he spent idyllic years with his wife, Helen Elizabeth Lynch, their daughters Nancy and Sally, and a succession of beloved family dogs.

In 1948 he was appointed the first Curator of Manuscripts in the Houghton Library, and after only twenty months he could report that through "simplification and consolidation" he had established the Manuscript Department, invented standards for cataloguing and classification (perfectly suited for the internet incarnation that would follow), catalogued 20,929 pieces,

including 660 codices, and produced 10,500 catalogue cards. His ability to read European handwriting in all periods and languages was legendary. All the while he demonstrated in the journals that he could solve bibliographical puzzles which had baffled others (casting off copy, half-sheet imposition, and the like). His copy of R. B. McKerrow's *Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* is broken open from the insertion of notes and pictures, its pages heavily marked with comments and call numbers of examples at Harvard—the armory of a great teacher. During these years he mastered the art of letterpress printing on the old Washington handpress in Lamont Library, educating himself on the effective relationship between the press and its products and issuing many a poppet over his proprietary imprint, Palimpsest Press.

When the manuscript fragments of Christopher Smart's "Jubilate Agno" came to him for accessioning, he perceived the antiphonal relation of the lines, establishing as a minor classic with his article and edition what had previously been considered disjointed ravings of a bedlamite. In 1955 he revealed Philip Hofer's premier collection of *Illuminated and Calligraphic Manuscripts* with an exhibition and catalogue, and he edited the 626-page *Supplement to the Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada* in 1962.

In 1964 William Jackson died and Bond succeeded him as Librarian of the Houghton Library (1965) and Professor of Bibliography (1967). He promoted his assistant, Rodney G. Dennis, to Curator of Manuscripts, and he recalled Roger E. Stoddard to the Library to assist him in accessions; those two worked fraternally under his sympathetic administration. He cultivated Donald and Mary Hyde in the hope, realized after Mary's death, of securing for Harvard their celebrated collection of books and manuscripts by Dr. Samuel Johnson and his circle. In 1967 he edited both the selected papers of Jackson and a spectacular illustrated album featuring the various departments and collections of the Library, and in 1970 a collection of essays memorializing Donald F. Hyde. In 1971 he was called on to produce protocols, still in use, on "The Acquisition of Art," thereby protecting the University from thoughtless acts that have caused much trouble in other institutions, and in 1973 he drafted the Bylaws for the new HU Librarians' Assembly.

He endured the lengthy excavation for the Pusey Library and the protracted renovation of Houghton's second floor for future accommodation of the Hydes's collection as well as unpleasant budget maneuvers from the central administration, all the while inspiring by his example collegial feelings and generous acts among his staff. A fortieth-anniversary library exhibition was dedicated to him upon his retirement in 1982, and he continued to teach until 1986. In 1981-82 Cambridge University appointed him Sanders Reader in Bibliography and in 1982-83 the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation granted him a fellowship in support of his study of Harvard's great library benefactor, Thomas Hollis. His book, *Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn*, was published in 1990, with Hugh Amory he edited the early catalogues of the College Library (1996), and he left at his death on November 18, 2005 the completed

manuscript of a “Checklist of Thomas Hollis’s [3,000] Gifts to the Harvard College Library.”

He was elected president of the Bibliographical Society of America, the Club of Odd Volumes, and the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, and honorary member of the Harvard Class of 1937; and he was appointed councilor of the American Antiquarian Society and trustee of the Concord Free Public Library, Historic Deerfield, and the R. W. Emerson Memorial Association.

An English colleague, A. R. A. Hobson, writes “He was the most upright man I have known.” As the Reverend Professor Peter J. Gomes describes him: “He represented the best of life at Harvard and for so long and for so many.”

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Aaron
Rodney G. Dennis †
James Engell
Michael Shinagel
Roger E. Stoddard, Chair