

From: John Stubbs <jstubbs@wmf.org>  
To: ncline@fas.harvard.edu <ncline@fas.harvard.edu>  
CC: Sidney Verba <sverba@harvard.edu>; Toshiko Mori  
Sent: Fri Jul 07 15:45:03 2006  
Subject: RE: Woodberry Poetry Reading Room in Lamont Library at Harvard

Dear Dr. Cline,

Thank you for this very helpful further explanation of the rationale and the lengths to which both the Lamont Library and its preservation architects, Einhorn Yaffe & Associates, have gone to thus far to preserve the historic fabric and character of the Woodberry Poetry Reading Room at Harvard. Clearly through your concerted efforts both client and architect are aware of what is at stake here and are doing your best to accommodate some very tough planning challenges, especially with regard to new use requirements.

As one who has done little more than follow the story over that past two weeks or so, it strikes me that there a good deal of misunderstanding about the solutions which the library and its restoration architects are proposing. Alas, this situation is not unusual in our age of short and quick communications by email and the like. Adding to this, it is well known that restoring famous historic interiors is one of the hardest tasks in historic preservation, especially when wide consensus is required.

For what it is worth WMF has learned to stem communication problems, such as those you may have here, by providing at the outset of an intended project an extremely clear proposal, possibly layered in complexity, which is made available in diverse forms to all interested parties. If such a proposal is not already in hand, then perhaps a simple one might be produced at this time which addresses at least the key concerns. Of interest here, I should think, would be all documentation of the room in its original form, detailed descriptions of changes to it over time, a thorough condition report on all furniture and fittings, assessments of the significance of the whole and its constituent parts, detailed portrayals of all new interventions, and a summarization of the results which shows in detail the quantity and nature of the changes which are proposed. For this last item, a compelling "vision" of the space from different points of view showing original, "as found", and proposed designs might help in communicating not just what the restoration plan entails, but why it is proposed. Such a quantity/quality survey and analysis can also serve as a valuable record for future reference, and can even serve in fund raising should it be necessary.

It is quite possible that such a fine firm as Einhorn Yaffee has done such a report already. If so, then please ignore my suggestion. If not, something along these lines might be considered as means of enjoining everyone--doubters and all--in what promises to be both a highly important and highly visible restoration project.

My best wishes to you, the architects, and those in the community in resolving the remaining details of restoring the Woodberry Poetry Reading Room. I would be pleased to try and help further if you think it useful.

Sincerely,

John H Stubbs  
Vice President, Field Projects  
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