

Reducing & Reusing Harvard's Furniture



HARVARD
Campus Services
ENERGY & FACILITIES

College & University Forum, 03/18, Boston College

RecyclingWorks / CET

Rob Gogan, Manager, Harvard Recycling Services

156 Western Avenue

Allston MA 02134

rob_gogan@harvard.edu



*Graduates and parents use Harvard chairs at
Lawrence Charter School Commencement, 2013*

Dorm Redesign Prevents Flood of Student Furniture

- Upholstered common rooms preempt student purchases of futons, coffee tables & chairs
- Energy-efficient, fire code compliant appliances make personal mini-fridges and microwaves unnecessary
- Good lighting prevents personal lamps
- First year after House Renewal: Move-out reusables donations drop by 75%; decrease in trash
- Bonus: elevators ramps for ADA compliance allow barrier-free recycling
- LEED Platinum for Stone Hall



Move-out avalanche



- Community volunteers help pick up goods on Senior Move-out Day (students going and gone)

- Summer housing & board for 10 volunteers for Harvard Habitat for Humanity
- HHH volunteers receive & sort 250-400 truckloads at warehouse



Harvard Habitat for Humanity Stuff Sales

- Stuff Sales conducted on Harvard Plaza next to the Yard
- 10 to 14 Sales days at Move-In
- In 22 years of Stuff Sales, revenues to HHH of \$970,000
- Most profitable sales items: Futons, mini-fridges, microwaves, lamps, mirrors
- Sold separately: books, clothing, special items (e.g., antiques, rugs, custom furniture)

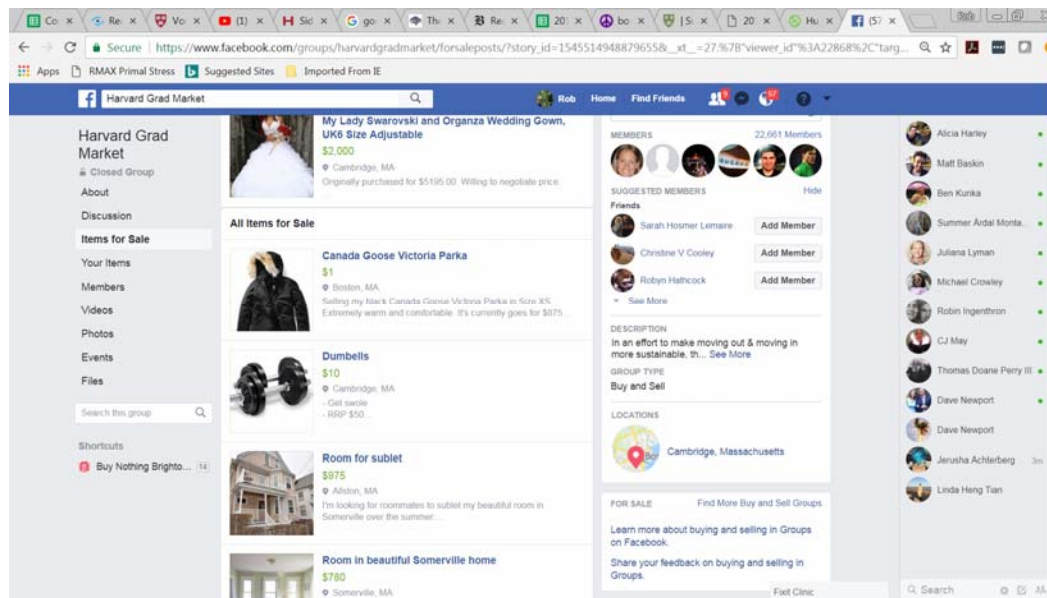


FreeCycles

- Focus on staff sharing
 - Goods from home & work
 - Barrier-free location needed for carts & dollies
 - Watch out for re-sellers
- Most donated items: paper sorting trays, binders, Rol-o-dex
 - Items most in demand: tools, books, kitchen ware, electronics
 - Need for regular, predictable times so people can stage and prepare their goods for donation
 - Need to arrive with “Seed Hampers” of donations for early shoppers



Private Exchanges: Social Media, ListServes



Caution: Need to keep lists closed or monitored to prevent unauthorized access to student residences.

- Pickup, temporary storage obstacles
- Unrealistic student view of value of goods prevents timely donation
- MIT “Infinite Corridor” enables vehicle-free removal by most of campus of furniture, food; reuse@mit.edu and freefood@mit.edu

Repairs & modifications

- Abundant maple desks don't move in portable electronics era, so we cut them down for bedside dressers and warehouse supply organizers (thanks to Household Goods of Massachusetts for the idea!)
- Volunteer corps does simple fixes: chair casters, bookshelf support pins, cosmetic upgrades, cleaning
- Sales of high-value items benefit Harvard Habitat for Humanity



Harvard Thursday Surplus Distribution

- 50-100 visitors arrive to shop each Thursday 11-2 PM (all items free)
- First-come, first-served: tags to hold goods for up to one week
- Trucks and traffic issues: need to hire parking monitor
- Team of 20 volunteers (mostly retirees):
 - Gatekeeping
 - Tagging and reserving
 - Repairs
 - Loading



Caution: Volunteers, employees may want to scavenge higher value goods

Overseas Shipments



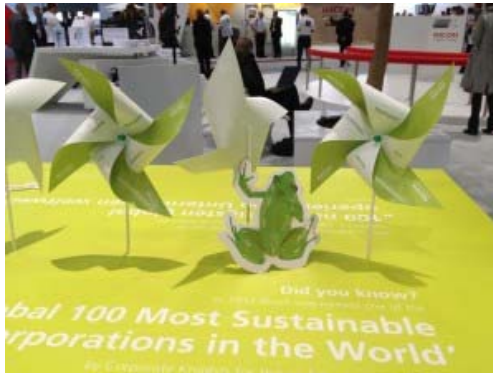
Workers for Ecole Polyvalent of the Port-au-Prince Archdiocese unload container of donations from Harvard. Note "PBHA Leader" Harvard T-shirt. **Caution: donation of insignia ware may be forbidden.** Photo by P. Ligonde

- Immigrant neighbors and international students want to send goods back home
- Overseas shipping container compatibility items (need to be nestable and not bulky)
- **Need to establish fair distribution system for groups seeking the same items**
- Most desired items:
 - Stacking or folding chairs, tablet chairs
 - Folding tables
 - Medical supplies and equipment
 - Light-weight clothing and shoes

Producer take-back



- Success story: Pallets
- Success story: Ricoh copiers—take back copiers, toners, boxes and all packaging
- Work in progress: Mattresses



Surplus Distribution & Semi-New Computers

- Harvard College student program beginning 2003 to repair, refurbish and re-sell; Semi-New Computers is now run by two retirees
- Most customers are Harvard hourly employees, local non-profits, and overseas programs
- Much labor is provided by LABBB vocational training for special-needs students of high school age paid hourly wage
- Printers, AV goods, wires & monitors given away at Surplus Distribution



Caution: Secure and shred any confidential data. Recycle all remaining scraps with R2 or eStewards certified recycler.

Bicycle recovery

- Hundreds of abandoned bikes tagged across campus yearly (Texas A & M: 2,000 bikes)
- Tagged bikes removed and “seasoned” to give owners a chance to claim them
- Unclaimed bikes sent to Quad Bikes after 90 days
- QB takes parts and donates residue to Harvard Recycling
- Parts go to US, Haitian & African bikers including all tubes & tires



We lack the room for surplus stores & wares.
Come, students and neighbors, for tables and chairs.



--John Harvard