PHOTOFEST / PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Sorting it out: Jack Nicholson and Shirley Maclaine in *Terms of Endearment*.

more closely with what is known about how real people respond to life conflicts. "You can use it much as you would a technical adviser if you were doing a film about science," says Stern, *Dialogue*'s editor for media issues. "And you can include these ideas without bastardizing the show or making it into a polemic or a preachment."

Assistant clinical professor of psychiatry John Livingstone, M.D. '58, *Dialogue*'s editor for mental health issues, says, "We want to help writers and directors engage the audience by portraying characters who resonate with their own lives. Young people need heroes who can find adaptive solutions to disputes. Portrayals can be exciting and interesting and at the same time promote healthy development of children and parents."

The newsletter's first issue, on "The Path From Loss to Growth," listed several ways in which loss can be disguised (the worsening of an existing illness, for example) and offered a "menu" that identified ten characteristics of resilient people—those who bounce back well from losses. Livingstone discussed the movie *Terms of Endearment* by analyzing the responses its central characters (played by Shirley Maclaine, Debra Winger, and Jack Nicholson) had to the losses they sustained. *Dialogue*'s second issue considered risktaking; its third and fourth focus on violence.

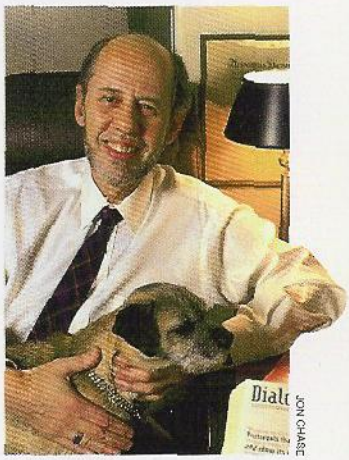
"Maybe the best use of this information is to make it easier for people like me to write about the human condition," says screenwriter Diane Rudnick Mann, "so as to give the few studio executives over twelve who can read an opportunity to understand what humanity is, if only vicariously."

Dialogue has five thousand paid subscribers (at $12 for four issues) and circulates to another twenty thousand members of the Writers Guild of America (WGA), the professional association for film and television writers. "To distribute it to the membership was an unprecedented move for the WGA," says Livingstone.

"Writers complain that they are writing good stuff but they don't know how to weave it through the system," Livingstone says. "The TV network's marketing department tells them that you need at least one car crash or one murder between 8:00 and 8:30 to get the [Nielsen rating] numbers to sell the product. We hope writers read *Dialogue* for help in preserving the human truths of the story through the necessities of commercial mandates."

Stern agrees that there is ample room for progress: "A great deal of misinformation is sent out by the uninformed, who are working for the uncaring and supervised by the unimaginative."

—*C. L.*



JON CHASE

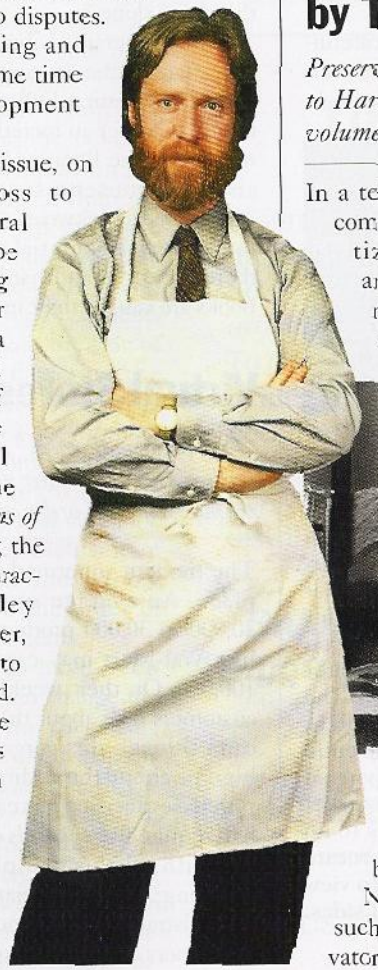
Sorting it out: Dr. John Livingstone and "co-therapist" Chad.

Reading Books by Their Covers

Preservation is one thing, conservation another; to Harvard's head book conservator, books speak volumes—with no audio version required.

In a television advertisement, a youngster at a computer terminal gazes intently at the digitized page of a book that, the narrator announces, is stored in a library thousands of miles away. With the touch of a key, the reader turns a virtual page. It is a compelling image (regardless of whether it is technologically plausible) that propounds a prevalent notion: in this electronic age, books are becoming anachronisms.

Nicholas Pickwoad, for one, is skeptical of such visions. Recently appointed chief conservator in the University libraries—the first per-



VANESA PLUDRA (STANDING), JANE REED (WORKING)

Resewing a handmade book is but one of several conservation tasks Nicholas Pickwoad is prepared for. He is sewing gathered pages with linen thread to linen tapes, the vertical elements in the photograph.

son to hold the position—Pickwoad is responsible for the physical care of Harvard's vast rare book collections. Formerly a conservator with Britain's National Trust and a disciple of the great conservator Roger Powell (who restored Ireland's *Book of Kells*), Pickwoad hopes to propagate his belief in the physical importance of books. "Very few people realize that books have an incredible potential to describe the cultures that produced them," he says. "The physical aspects of a book—the structure, the binding, the materials used in the cover—hold enormous stores of information. Every book is literally a piece of history."

At Harvard Pickwoad has found a treasure trove for conducting what the French call *"l'archéologie du livre."* The Law School's Langdell Library, for example, houses a collection of sixteenth-century legal texts in Latin that, as Pickwoad discovered, reveal an interesting anomaly. Although the pages of many of the books were printed in Lyons, France, these particular bindings could only have been produced in Italy, the unrivaled center of European legal thought. At the time, according to Pickwoad, it was common practice to buy from a printer the pages of a book that one would then have bound at a local bindery. Thus, the physical composition of the law books points to a French influence on Italian law during a crucial era in legal history.

It is not necessarily the most elegant or carefully wrought bindings that fascinate Pickwoad; certain mundane bindings hold interest precisely because of their quotidian nature. Inexpensiv bindings reveal that Milton, in his day, was favorite of the aristocracy; most surviving origin editions have sheepskin bindings, which carri considerably less cachet than the elegant calf- an goatskin bindings adorning the bookshelves noblemen. Examining a collection of Anglica prayer books revealed profound theological diffe ences between rich and poor congregations in si teenth- and seventeenth-century England.

Physical, artifactual details like these can su gest how books were disseminated and, mo importantly, to whom. Unfortunately this info mation is rapidly vanishing amid the race to pr serve intellectual content. "There are vast num bers of books that we will be the last generatio to see," says Pickwoad. "The raw material for thi kind of research is very limited and rapidly disap pearing."

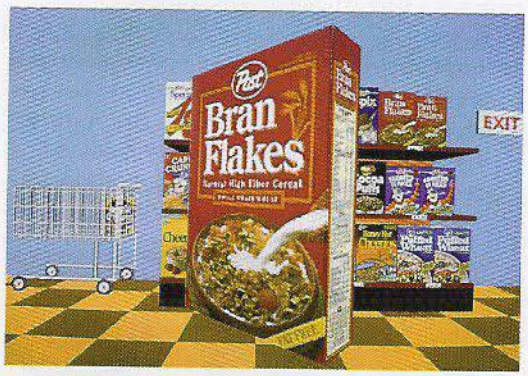
"The central mission of libraries is to provid access to their holdings," says Pickwoad. "This inevitably at odds with the goal of preservin what they have." It's a prickly dilemma, but Pick woad hopes to encourage formalized training fo researchers and librarians in the importance o physical caretaking. "No repair is reversible," h says. "Once a book is re-bound, information lost. But it's within our power to improve the wa things are done."

The University Library is moving to create new, state-of-the-art conservation laboratory with in its Preservation Office. "The potential is her to pull together an incredible range of expertise— not just in the libraries but from chemists, physi cists, the museums, and all over the depart ments," says Pickwoad. "Harvard could turn itsel into a very influential voice in this arena. Bu there are rocks and hard places everywhere, and books are caught right in the middle."

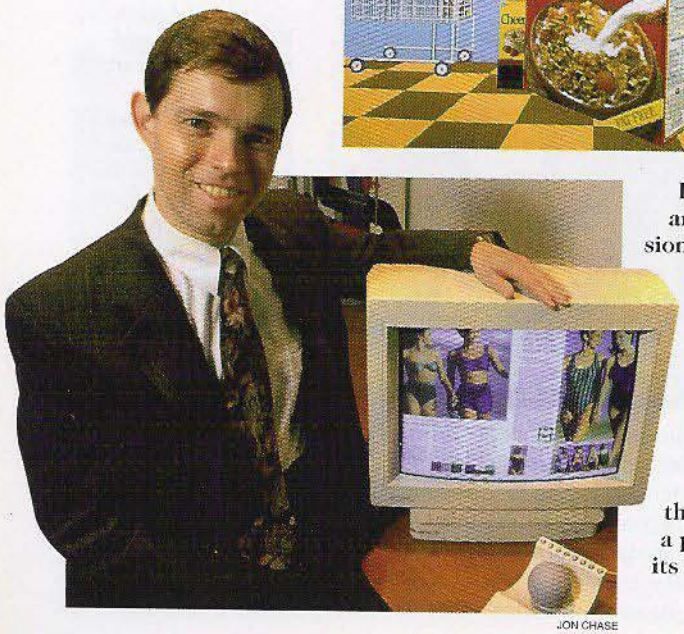
—*A.G. Wright*

Microfilm Risks

Preservation activities in most libraries—including Harvard's—involve a great deal of microfilming, easily the most cost-efficient method of preserving a book's contents. If performed properly, microfilming can both salvage the intellectual content and protect the book itself from scholarly wear and tear. But microfilm can become a poor catch-all solution. Says Nicholas Pickwoad, "Too many books worldwide have been destroyed as a result of microfilming." And preserving access to a book's intellectual content can undermine the conservation of the physical structure of the volume.



Right: Raymond Burke's electronic supermarket. Shoppers may take a box from the shelves, examine it, and put it in the basket—or not.



JON CHASE

Left: Burke with an electronic version of a mail-order catalogue for swimwear on the computer screen. The trackball in the foreground enables virtual supermarket shoppers to do things like rotate a package to view its back and sides.

Virtual Stores

"Desktop virtual reality" allows market researchers to study consumers in their native habitat—the market the mall, the mail-order catalogue. Well, virtually.

The modern supermarket is a fairly bewilderin place. An average grocery superstore stock 20,000 to 30,000 products, and a mass merchan like Wal-Mart may carry as many as 70,000 t 100,000. On their weekly shopping trips, typica customers take about thirty minutes to push thei carts through this gargantuan array and end u buying about three dozen items. The average purchase decision takes about twelve seconds half require five seconds or less.

"With all this complexity, how are people deciding?" asks associate professor of busines administration Raymond Burke. "If you talk t consumers afterward, most cannot recall the price