

News, Notes, and Queries

Medical Archives and Manuscripts News 1999

In spite of occasional suggestions to the contrary, archivists and historians are on the same side in the project to preserve the documentary inheritance and make it usefully accessible to the public. Over time, ever more material is permanently fixed in publicly-accessible libraries and archive repositories, and the means of access to that material is being transformed by electronic delivery. For the time being it is largely a question of delivering data about the documents to the user. In time however there is no doubt that digital surrogates of many original documents will be available, opening the prospect of virtual archives accessible via the Internet. In this brave new world of digital-archive building partnership between archivists and historians will be at a premium.

In libraries, the first generation of textual-interface electronic catalogues of printed books are now being replaced by a new range of graphical models accessible via the World Wide Web. Most manuscript and archive collections have never been catalogued electronically, and their users have so far enjoyed few benefits from the automation revolution. This is now changing: not only are more individual archival finding aids being automated, but collaborative projects to provide cross-repository access to data are in progress. An example is the Access to Archives project co-ordinated by the Public Record Office to provide a union gateway to the archival resources of the entire country at a meta-data level. Information about the project can be found at <http://www.pro.gov.uk/a2a/default.htm>. This national archive network is expected to come about through the coalescence of various schemes currently being set up to span particular regions or professional sectors. One such development, begun in 1999, is the unified guide to archives and

manuscript collections in higher education institutions in the greater London area, which will also cover the resources of the Royal Colleges of Physicians, Surgeons and Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, as well as the Royal Society and the Wellcome Library. An alternative focus is represented by the Artists' Papers Register, a database for the location of papers of artists, designers and craftsmen, which has recently been mounted on the Web (www.hmc.gov.uk/artists). Of more obvious interest to medical historians, the Medical Archives and Manuscripts Survey (MAMS) reports for London, until now available only as hard-copy lists in the Wellcome Library, will also be mounted soon on the Wellcome website. At first search facilities will continue to be fairly basic, consisting of the capacity to search the text for specific words; it is intended that later phases of the project will add more detailed indexing, allowing searches by subject, and will extend the coverage beyond London. In addition, the Hospital Records Database, currently available only in the search rooms of the Public Record Office and the Wellcome Library, should be mounted on the websites of both bodies by the end of 1999, offering a further useful tool for the researcher wishing to locate administrative and clinical records of over 2700 hospitals held in over 1600 repositories throughout the UK. The Wellcome's website is at www.wellcome.ac.uk/library.

These various initiatives focus on meta-data, on presenting catalogue information about archives rather than upon electronic representation of documents themselves. For most archive material this is the priority. There are, however, various projects to make manuscript material available via electronic media. One example may be found at the Bodleian Library website (<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>), where

several medieval manuscripts have been mounted in digitised form. Detailed catalogue information is intended to complement the images.

The annual digest of medical-related accessions to archive repositories during 1998 produced by the Historical Manuscripts Commission (www.hmc.gov.uk) shows that documentary resources of potential interest to medical historians continue to be enriched. It is good to note that the case books of John Langdon-Down (1828–1896), founder of Normansfield Hospital and eponym of Down's Syndrome, have found their way to London Metropolitan Archives. As in previous years, the accessions of personal papers in the medical-related field to the Wellcome Library's Contemporary Medical Archives Centre leave other institutions in the shade; among various tantalizing acquisitions we would highlight the papers of Lord Horder (1871–1955), physician to four successive monarchs, and those of Silas Mainville Burroughs (1846–1895), Henry Wellcome's partner in the creation of the drugs company that, by the accident of Burroughs' early death, came to be named after only one of the partners.

The great bulk of institutional records acquired during 1998 were from the twentieth century; exceptions were records of the Foundling Hospital from 1680 onwards, received by London Metropolitan Archives, and of the Kent Medical Benevolent Society, dating back to 1787, acquired by the Centre for Kentish Studies. A considerable number of accessions were of hospital and asylum plans and drawings, including institutions in Warrington and Winwick (Cheshire Record Office), St Bartholomew's Hospital Rochester (Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre), and hospitals in Banstead and Epsom (Surrey History Centre). Amidst continued concern about the loss of hospital clinical records, it is noteworthy that Cambridgeshire Record Office received patients' case files from Papworth Hospital,

c. 1925–1967. Most other accessions from hospitals are described merely as "records", and it must be assumed that they are generally administrative rather than clinical. This of course is certainly the case with records of medical-related administrative bodies such as health boards and authorities. Edinburgh City Archives acquired minutes of the Edinburgh Board of Health, 1831–32, doubtless the precursor of the regular local board of health and set up in anticipation of the impact of the first great cholera epidemic.

It is our perception that fewer records of small organizations and charities have made their way into repositories during the year. This may reflect the fact that there are now more professional archivists in this field. Records of many important medical charities are still at risk and raising standards of care is one of the concerns of CHARM (the Charity Archivists and Records Managers Group) whose members include archivists from the British Red Cross, NSPCC, and Save the Children.

This year has finally seen the appearance of the revised Health Service Circular 'For the record: managing records in NHS trusts and health authorities. Department of Health Guidance to the preservation of hospital medical records' (HSC 1999/053). It is available from the DOH, PO Box 410, Wetherby LS23 7LN or on the DOH website (www.doh.gov.uk/lnhsexec/manrec.htm). This document has been long awaited by hospital records managers, archivists and historians, who will continue to debate issues around the selection of such records for permanent preservation. On the other hand, the Data Protection Act 1998 will come into force on 1 March 2000. It adds another dimension to the discussion about the preservation of patient records: archivists are concerned that medical records are not lost to posterity as a result of the Act. It will also be interesting to see how it works in practice with certain aspects of the proposed Freedom of Information legislation.

News, Notes and Queries

'A Healthy Heritage', a conference on the acquisition and appraisal of medical library resources, published and unpublished, took place at the Wellcome Trust in March 1999. Although participants agreed more could and should be done to ensure the preservation of archives, it was pointed out

that archive repositories were already alert to issues of selection and appraisal. One particularly interesting proposal suggested was the appointment of regional co-ordinators who could develop collection policy by liaison across different health sectors.

Wellcome Institute Library Change of Name

As reported in the October issue, the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine ceased to exist as a name and a legal entity from 1 October 1999. It has been necessary, therefore, to rename the library. The Governors of the Wellcome Trust have approved the new title of

'Wellcome Library for the History & Understanding of Medicine', which for practical purposes may be abbreviated to 'Wellcome Library'. The new name of the Academic Unit will be announced as soon as it is known.

The Estes Award

This award has been established in honour of Dr J Worth Estes, and in testimony to his many years of invaluable contributions to the history of medicine. The award will be made annually for the best published paper in the history of pharmacology during the previous year, whether appearing in a journal or a book collection of papers. The choice of topic reflects Worth Estes' long tenure as Professor of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics at Boston University and his own considerable scholarship in the history of pharmacology.

For the purpose of this award, the history of pharmacology will be broadly defined to include ancient and traditional materia media, folk medicines, herbal medicines, the pharmaceuticals and medications of the modern era, pharmaceuticals, and the like. It shall encompass the discovery of medicaments, basic investigations regarding them, their characteristics and properties, their preparation, and their therapeutic

applications. While the Committee will be monitoring relevant journals and books where such papers might appear, they welcome nominations of papers that would be eligible for consideration. The nomination should consist of a letter citing the work nominated, along with a copy of the paper. Nominations should be directed to the chair of the Committee: Dr John L Parascandola, Public Health Service Historian, 18-23 Parklawn Building, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857, USA.

For this first award, candidate papers will be those published in 1998 and 1999. Nominations must be received by the Committee Chair by 15 January 2000.

The first award will be presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for the History of Medicine in Bethesda, MD, 18-21 May 2000. As a result of a generous contribution in honour of Worth Estes from one of the members of the Association, the award will be accompanied by a check for \$500.

The New York Academy of Medicine
Research Fellowships in the Academy Library
Academic Year 2000–2001

Each year the New York Academy of Medicine offers the Paul Klemperer Fellowship and the Audrey and William H Helfand Fellowship to support work in history and the humanities as they relate to medicine, the biomedical sciences, and health.

The Klemperer Fellowship supports research using the Academy Library as a historical resource. It is intended specifically for a scholar in residence in the collections of the Academy Library. The Helfand Fellowship more broadly supports work in the humanities, including both creative projects dealing with health and the medical enterprise, and scholarly research in a humanistic discipline as applied to medicine and health. Although residence is not obligatory, preference in the selection process will be given applicants whose projects require use of the resources of the Academy Library and who plan to spend time at the Academy.

Both fellowships provide stipends of up to \$5,000 to support travel, lodging and incidental expenses for a flexible period between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2001. Besides completing research or a creative project, each Fellow will be expected to make a presentation at the Academy and submit a final report on the project. We invite applications from anyone—regardless

of citizenship, academic discipline, or academic status—who wishes to use the Academy's collections for historical research or for a scholarly or creative project in the medical humanities. Preference will be given to (1) those who show the need to use resources that are uniquely available at the Academy, and (2) scholars or creative artists in the early stages of their careers.

Applicants may compete for either the Klemperer or the Helfand Fellowship, but not both. These fellowships are awarded directly to the individual applicant and not to the institution where he or she may normally be employed. None of the fellowship money is to be used for institutional overhead. Applications must be received by the Academy by 4 February 2000; candidates will be informed of the results by 15 May 2000. The application form and instructions for completing it are available on the World Wide Web, at www.nyam.org/history/histinstr.html.

Requests for application forms (for those unable to access the forms through the web) or further information should be addressed to: Office of the Associate Librarian for Historical Collections and Programs, New York Academy of Medicine, 1216 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10029. Email: history@nyam.org. Telephone: 212-822-7314.