

News, Notes, and Queries

Medical Archives and Manuscripts News, 2007

The major event of 2007 was the return of the Wellcome Library to its refurbished home in the Wellcome Building, following some two-and-a-half years enforced exile across the road. Increased and refreshed reader facilities and a greater proportion of the book stock on open access are the chief benefits of the change; users of archives and manuscripts specifically will find a more commodious and better-equipped specialist reading room (the Rare Materials Room) and an associated Viewing Room available for pre-arranged events at which rare library artefacts can be conveniently displayed to visitors.

The annual digest of accessions to repositories in 2006 relating to health and medicine, published by the National Archives (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/accessions/2006/06digests/medic.htm), reveals an unusually large proportion of accessions of nursing and midwifery records by local record offices, ranging from papers, including an autobiography, of a district nurse in Bearsted (Centre for Kentish Studies), to nursing records of several greater Manchester hospitals (Greater Manchester County Record Office) and midwifery records of Stogumber and district (Somerset Record Office). Unfortunately, the digest does not for the most part include dates, thus severely restricting its usefulness. Since dates are supplied by the various archivists in their annual submissions for *Accessions to Repositories* it is beyond understanding why they are not included in the publication. One assumes that the majority of records, including those noted above, are from the twentieth century.

Among other entries the eye settles on two for private asylums, Eastgate House Lincoln (Lincolnshire Archives) and the Priory Roehampton (Wellcome Library). Although the digest does not reveal as much, the records of the former cover the entire period of its short existence from 1851 to 1856, under the

proprietorship and management of Robert Gardiner Hill, a pioneer of the practice of non-restraint. The Priory record is a lone “logbook” or casebook, detailing the medical history of all patients admitted between July 1905 and January 1909. This item was acquired from a dealer and appears to be a stray survivor from the early records of the asylum. The patient’s experience is captured more directly in other accessions notified in 2006: West Sussex Record Office acquired copies of the official publication of ‘The Guinea Pig Club’, the society for former patients of the plastic surgeon Sir Archibald McIndoe at Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead, during the Second World War, dating from 1949 to 2002; meanwhile the British Library accessioned recordings from the oral history project ‘HIV in the Family’.

Some tantalizing records of doctors as travellers are indicated by the journal of a voyage to Madras by Samuel Dyer, surgeon of Ringwood, 1802 (Hampshire Record Office), the diary of a whaling voyage by the surgeon James Williamson, 1835–36 (Tyne and Wear Archives), and the correspondence of Thomas Graham, naval surgeon, 1830–50, whose career took him to Ireland, the Mediterranean, the Americas and China (Wellcome Library). Medics departing even further from the day job range from Philip Michael Stell, professor of otolaryngology, whose papers as a medieval historian were acquired by York Minster Archives, to Louisa Garrett Anderson, physician and suffragette, whose papers were accessioned by the Women’s Library. Additional letters received by the famous historian of seventeenth-century science and medicine, Sir Geoffrey Keynes, were reported by Cambridge University Library. Meanwhile even records of the careers of medical archivists are apparently now being preserved for posterity: Aberdeen University Library has acquired papers of Alistair Tough, archivist of the Greater Glasgow Health Board.

Applications to the Wellcome Trust's Research Resources in Medical History funding programme continued unabated during 2006/07. Among the more interesting archival projects funded were those to preserve Edinburgh's twentieth-century reproductive and sexual health case notes (Lothian Health Services Archive); to preserve the early medical archives in the University of Aberdeen; to conserve the patient records of the York Retreat (Borthwick Institute); and to catalogue the records of the Biochemical Society, including the laboratory notebooks of the double Nobelist Sir Fred Sanger. A full list of grants awarded from 2001 can be found at http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/doc_WTX028724.html.

Many applications to RRMH relate to proposals to preserve and make accessible patient records, usually generated by hospitals. Such records remain vulnerable to neglect and loss because they enjoy little formal protection under the existing legal framework. This is an area in which historians of medicine and medical archivists can usefully support each other, to highlight the research potential of clinical records and frame guidance for health administrators and archivists to facilitate effective and appropriate preservation and management of such material. Much of the archival thinking in this area is articulated via the Health Archives and Records Group (HARG) of the Society of Archivists, whose website (<http://www.healtharchives.org/aboutus.html#further>) provides access to the Group's deliberations and papers. The Wellcome Trust is looking to the expertise of members of HARG to help evaluate the restrictions on access to patient records that may be the subject of applications. HARG in turn, which maintains a 'Research value of health records and archives' sub-group, benefits from interactions with the user community.

A relatively new union database of potential interest to historians of medicine is the MIND database of archives relating to invention in the United States (http://www.invention.smithsonian.org/resources/MIND_about.aspx), hosted by the Smithsonian Institution's Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and

Innovation. Simple keyword searching is easy and rapid—random searches by this writer for ether, x-ray and insulin revealed 48, 7 and 4 hits respectively—with clickable links for the most part to collection-level descriptions of papers of inventors in repositories throughout the country. An advanced search facility provides fairly sophisticated options and the browse button opens up a long list of entries organized by broad category, including 'Medicine, Health and Life Sciences'.

Provision of on-line access to surrogates of documents and manuscripts continues apace. One of the most accomplished and mature resources for historians of medicine in this area is MEDICA, hosted by the Bibliothèque interuniversitaire de Médecine in Paris (<http://www.bium.univ-paris5.fr/histmed/medica.htm>). This is a multi-level resource which provides access to virtual copies of both printed and manuscript holdings of BIUM, together with explanatory and contextual matter. A home page lists various access points arranged by ancient author (Celsus, Galen), later doctor (Bichat, Gachet), specialty (dermatology, odontology, etc.), and so forth; clicking Bichat for instance reveals nine of his manuscripts amongst a total of 29 hits, with extensive selections of pages as high-quality surrogates.

A more recent spectacular manifestation of the application of digital technology to manuscripts is the Hooke Folio Turning the Pages facility in the Royal Society website (http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/library/HookeTTP/hooke_broadband.htm). This stray from the archives of the Society in the hand of Robert Hooke was discovered in a Shropshire attic and consigned for sale at Bonham's in 2006. The Royal Society successfully arranged a private sale following a public campaign. Hooke, who seems to have been a remarkably inefficient secretary to the Royal Society, copied these draft minutes in his official capacity, but never ensured that they were properly entered in the Society's formal records. The lacuna has now been filled, and public access provided in virtual form to this most redolent of relics of the Scientific Revolution.

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Call for Papers

**Cheiron: The International Society for the History of
Behavioral and Social Sciences**

The 40th Annual Meeting of Cheiron will take place on 26–29 June 2008 at Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario. Submissions of papers, posters, symposia, or workshops may deal with any aspect of the history of the behavioral and social sciences or with related historiographical and methodological issues. All submissions must be received by 11 January 2008. For information

about what is required for the various submissions and for student travel awards, see the website: <http://people.stu.ca/~cheiron>; or contact Ingrid Farreras at Department of Psychology, Hood College, 401 Rosemont Ave., Frederick, MD 21701, USA; Fax: 301-696-3863; e-mail: Ingrid Farreras at farreras@hood.edu.