

News, Notes, and Queries

Academic Unit Move

As announced in the last issue of *Medical History*, the Wellcome Institute's Academic Unit will move in late February to new premises at: **Euston House, 24, Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1AD.**

Euston House is situated across Euston Square, opposite the stairs on the east side of Euston Station. The Unit offices, lecture room, and seminar rooms will be on floors 2 and 3.

From Easter 1999, seminars will take place in

Euston House, but symposia will continue to be held in the Auditorium of the Wellcome Building. Postal addresses, e-mail addresses, and telephone and fax numbers remain unchanged.

It must be further stressed that the Wellcome Institute Library remains unaffected by these moves, and that plans are already being made for the return of the Academic Unit to the Wellcome Building in a few years time.

Medical Archives and Manuscripts News, 1998

Medieval medical manuscripts are only rarely offered for sale. 1997 was however an exception, as two important items came on the market during the year. For some time an American dealer had been seeking a buyer for a twelfth-century medical compendium written in England, when it was recognized early in the year to be a lost manuscript from the Army Medical Museum in Washington DC. The National Library of Medicine, successor to the Army Medical Museum, immediately attempted to reclaim its lost property. At the time of writing this matter is still unresolved. Towards the end of 1997 a thirteenth-century copy of the surgery of Albucasis, formerly in a private collection, was sold at auction at Sotheby's. Despite government-assisted efforts by the Wellcome Institute Library to purchase the manuscript, the item was secured by a trade buyer.

Each year some 250 archive repositories and record offices make a return of their new accessions to the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, which in turn produces a series of thematic digests for distribution to learned journals and news sheets. As in previous years, the majority of new accessions of medical-related material to repositories during 1997 were of twentieth-century material. Hospital records bulked large among accessions to local repositories, while personal papers were more in evidence in acquisitions by national institutions and universities. Among the latter was correspondence of John Lowe, physician to Edward VIII, acquired by the British Library, and diaries, correspondence, case notes and other

papers of R D Laing, received by Glasgow University Library. The Wellcome Institute Library continued in the forefront of specialist repositories in the field, with a variety of major acquisitions; these included the collection of manuscripts of the Royal College of General Practitioners, received following a rationalization of the latter's archives, correspondence and papers of Sir William Bayliss (1860–1924), and the autobiography of Florence Fenwick Miller (1854–1935), a pioneer of women in medicine. Among significant institutional accessions to the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre's collections were minutes and other records of the Nation's Fund for Nurses, 1916–80, and the archive of the British Association of Occupational Therapists, dating from 1936. Full details of the returns for 1997 are available via the Commission's web-site at <http://www.hmc.gov.uk>.

Increasingly archivists are grappling with the implications of new information technology as it affects the records in their care. The issues raised by electronic record-keeping, and the now routine use of e-mail, have serious long-term implications, not least because the records are sometimes never converted to hard copy. Yet with ever changing software and hardware, there are also major cost and time implications in upgrading electronic records to be able to continue to read them ad infinitum. Digitisation is sometimes seen as an alternative to microfilm as a means of saving quantities of information for future retrieval, but again this is expensive and also subject to the same problems: every 5 to

10 years an upgrade will be necessary to continue to be able to access and read the information. Good quality paper, stored well, lasts a very long time, but we are facing a revolution in the way we produce information, every bit as profound as the introduction of printing.

The Internet has raised the expectations of researchers, many of whom anticipate accessing the data in archives and manuscripts at the click of a mouse. It will be some time before this is a reality, and even then not all the documentation preserved in archives will be accessible. Most importantly, the first stage is to put the *descriptions* of the materials (lists and catalogues) on automated systems and up on the web. Readers wishing to explore an electronic catalogue might visit the web-site of the Public Record Office (recently redesigned) at <http://www.pro.gov.uk>, where catalogues of the records of selected government departments can be searched. The Public Record Office project is particularly interesting in that it makes use of the new technique of Encoded Archival Description (EAD), which manipulates data using a mark-up language rather than a database structure. The large number of archive repositories and the proliferation of web-sites makes coordination and networking essential. The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts has long had the responsibility for coordinating information about non-governmental records in the UK. The Commission's National Register of Archives (NRA) database has been available on the Internet since 1995, via the "telnet" application. The Commission also provides information on individual archive repositories, and a direct route to their web pages where

available, through its ARCHON (Archives online) gateway, accessible via <http://www.hmc.gov.uk>. In due course additional access to the NRA database via the Web is envisaged.

Within the Wellcome Institute Library a major electronic resource for users of manuscripts and archives has become available. The Wellcome Archives database now provides access to the archives of the Wellcome Institute, its predecessor body the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, and the papers of Sir Henry Wellcome himself, founder of the entire Wellcome enterprise. Two banks of electronic data about the location of different types of archive material, the Hospital Records database and the Pharmaceutical Records database, both available in the Wellcome Institute Library (and the former additionally in the Public Record Office) were noted last year. It is hoped that in the near future the data gathered by the Medical Archives and Manuscripts Survey (MAMS), currently accessible only via hard-copy survey reports, will be available via the Wellcome Trust's web-site. The Society of Archivists, the body representing archive professionals in the British Isles, set up its own web-site during 1997 at <http://www.archives.org.uk>, featuring a regularly-changing "cover image" drawn from some aspect of British archives or their care: November 1997 saw a "Wound-Man" from Wellcome Western MS.290 displayed here. This cover-story promises to be one of the more interesting and unpredictable locations devoted to archives on the Internet, and it is well worth visiting the site and browsing through the archive of previous cover images.

Call for Papers

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

The annual meeting of Cheiron will be held 10-13 June 1999 at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario. Programme submissions (symposia, papers, and posters) may deal with any aspect of the history of the behavioral and social sciences or with related historiographical or methodological issues. Submissions must be postmarked by 1 February 1999. Travel awards

are available to assist students who present papers or posters. For further information, contact Ellen Herman, Cheiron Program Chair, Department of History, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1288. Tel: (541) 346 3118; Fax: (541) 346-4895; e-mail: eherman@darkwing.uoregon.edu

Call for Papers

**6th Biennial Conference of the Australian Society
of the History of Medicine Inc, The University of Sydney**

The Conference will take place between 7 and 10 July 1999, and its theme will be 'Individuals and Institutions in the History of Medicine'. From this theme five main topic areas will be highlighted: 'Health, Medicine and Society at the turn of the Century'; 'Medical History—from the Viewpoint of the Historian and the Health Professional'; 'Medicine and Cultures; Art, Artefacts and Instruments—Pictorial Representations and Material Objects in the History of Health and Medicine; and Public History and the History of Medicine. Members of the Society and other interested persons are

invited to submit papers for the Programme Committee's consideration. Presentations of the above topics are encouraged, but papers on any aspect of the history of health, medicine and society are welcomed and will be considered for the Conference Programme. For further information please write to:

6th Biennial Conference of the Australian Society of the History of Medicine Inc.,
c/- ICMS Pty. Ltd., Locked Bag Q4002, QVB
Post Office NSW1230, Sydney, Australia.
Fax: + 61 2 9290 2444; tel.: + 61 2 9290 3366;
e-mail: hom@icms.com.au

Call for Papers

**The Bookshop of the World: A Celebration of 500 Years
of Printing and Publishing in the Low Countries**

An international conference to be held on 15–17 September 1999, organized by the Association for Low Countries Studies in the UK and Ireland and the British Library. The first and third days will be held at the British Library, the second day at the Wellcome Building. The conference will cover all aspects of the history of books, libraries and reading, including medicine and science, with particular emphasis on Anglo-

Dutch and Anglo-Belgian relations. Further details will be provided in the April issue. For information, contact The Centre for Dutch and Flemish Culture, Department of Dutch, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT. Tel.: 0171 504 2116. Fax: 0171 916 6985.

E-mail: ucldkrb@ucl.ac.uk.

Bakken Visiting Research Fellowships

The Bakken Library and Museum offers visiting research fellowships for the purpose of facilitating research in its collection of books, journals, manuscripts, prints, and instruments. The focus of The Bakken's collections is on the history of electricity and magnetism and their applications in the life sciences and medicine. Related materials include mesmerism and animal magnetism, nineteenth-century ephemera concerning alternative electromedical therapies, miscellaneous scientists' letters, and trade catalogues. The instruments include electrostatic generators, magneto-electric generators,

induction coils, physiological instruments, recording devices and accessories.

The fellowship is a maximum of \$1,300 and is to be used for travel, subsistence, and other direct costs of conducting research at The Bakken. The minimum period of residence is one week. The grants are open to all researchers. The application deadline for 1999 is 1 March 1999. For further information, please contact: David J Rhees, Executive Director, The Bakken Library and Museum, 3537 Zenith Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55416, USA. Tel: 612 927 6508; Fax: 612 927 7265.