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NEWS AND NOTES 1991, APRIL 12

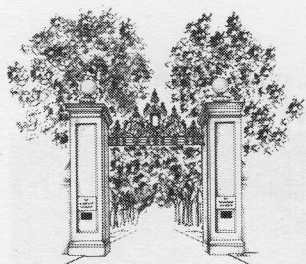
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News & Notes

Sonya Mirsky retires, banks on future

Sonya Wohl Mirsky, whose name has been practically synonymous with the Rockefeller library for generations of students, postdocs and faculty, will retire at the end of June as University Librarian and Curator of Special Collections. She plans to remain on campus part-time, handling the library's acquisitions and book cataloging.

Mirsky, a native New Yorker, joined the library in 1949, fresh from her undergraduate studies in science and mathematics at City College of New York—an unusual course of study for women in those days—and a master's degree in library science from Columbia University. "I made the decision when I was 12 to be a librarian," says Mirsky in her characteristically determined way, "and when I was in high school I refined that decision. I decided to become a science librarian." Mirsky continued her education while working at the Institute (as the University was called in those days) by taking graduate courses in mathematics at The Courant Institute of New York University.

Originally hired as an assistant librarian to handle cataloging and circulation, Mirsky worked her way up and was promoted in 1961 to associate librarian, a position she held until 1977, when she was appointed head librarian.

Mirsky was designated Uni-

☛ See **Mirsky** on page 4

Citing the importance of encouraging the research of junior faculty members, Sonya Wohl Mirsky, the University Librarian and Curator of Special Collections, has donated \$393,265 to the university. Mirsky, whose retirement is announced at left (see also related story, page 3), has requested that the interest on the funds, which will be added to the university's endowment, be used to support assistant professors with independent laboratories.

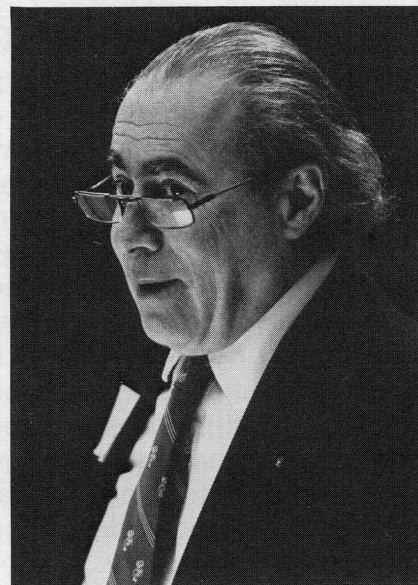
President David Baltimore, in acknowledging the gift, said, "As we move ahead with our plans to recruit outstanding young scientists at the assistant professor level and set them up as heads of new laboratories, it is good to know that we have the support of one of the most prominent, longtime members of the university community."

Genome Project: the ultimate map

The human genome—the repertoire of the 50,000 to 100,000 genes contained in each cell's nucleus—is the human book of life, encoding within its pages all the instructions our cellular machinery uses to build and maintain our bodies. The Human Genome Project is an attempt to read this vast book from beginning to end. Participants collaborating on the project hope to map the position of each gene on the chromosomes and to spell out the sequence of DNA that gives each gene its meaning.

This effort was the topic at a meeting of The Rockefeller University Council on April 4. The Council, a group of more than 150 distinguished men and women, promotes understanding of, and inspires private support for, the university's scientific endeavors.

The project, President David Baltimore said, was "born in sociological and scientific controversy." The roots of this controversy extend from Darwin's time, when the theory of evolution disturbed humanity's view of its place on earth, to the Nazis' perversion of



Norton Zinder

Bob Reichert

☛ See **Genome** on page 2

Genome (continued from page 1)

genetics, which shook humankind to its moral core. Ever since World War II, Baltimore said, "moral considerations pervade everything we do in genetics."

Indeed, many concerns about the Human Genome Project revolve around fears that knowledge of the minutest details of our genetic endowment will lead to attempts to manipulate it, select for desirable health or behavioral traits it supposedly "causes," or use it as a basis for discrimination.

These concerns, though understandable, are based on an oversimplified idea of what a gene can and cannot do, meeting participants said. "A gene does not equal a disease," said Professor Norton Zinder, Chairman of the Program Advisory Committee on the Human Genome. Many other factors may be involved in determining whether a person develops a disease. As Professor Jan Breslow pointed out, "With many complex conditions, such as heart disease, it is not a single gene, but rather the interaction of three or four genes, that heightens susceptibility." Moreover, he said, it is not just the genes, but the interaction of the genes with the environment, that may transform susceptibility into frank disease.

Nor does a gene determine behavior or personality. "Genes have subtle effects on biology, and these are then acted on by society," said Eric Lander, a member of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research.

If our genetic endowment does not define us, then what do we gain by defining it? A great deal, agreed participants. Mapping the entire genome, and de-

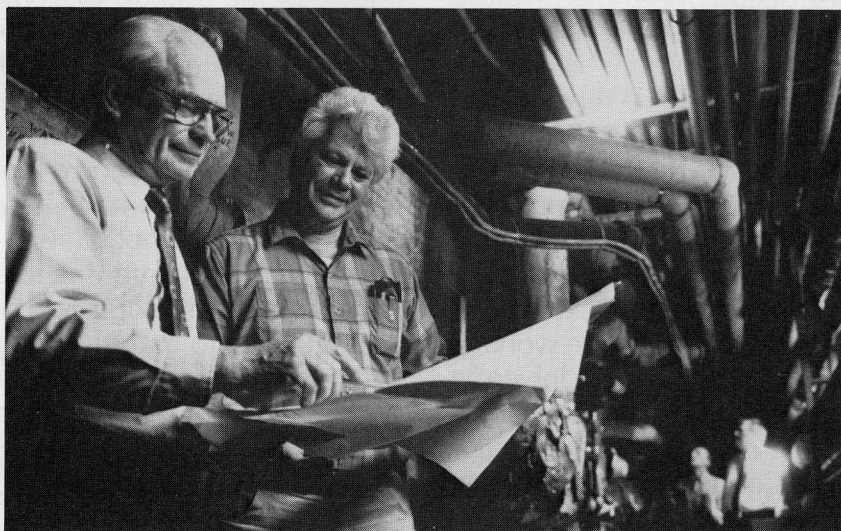
termining the structure of each individual gene, will ultimately provide doctors with potent new tools to diagnose and treat disease. (Even non-coding DNA, deemed by some to be "junk," may yield "little gold mines" of information that provide important insights into disease mechanisms, said Assistant Professor Titia de Lange.)

Basic science will benefit, too. The technology generated by the project will "change bright young people's ability to do science," Lander said. "Freed from methodological limitations, they'll be able to leverage their ideas and run with them."

—by Susan Blum

Cranefield publishes book on East Coast Fever

Professor Paul F. Cranefield's new book, *Science and Empire: East Coast Fever in Rhodesia and the Transvaal*, has just been published as part of Cambridge University Press' History of Medicine Series. East Coast Fever is a lethal disease of cattle caused by a parasite. The book describes the social and economic impact of an outbreak of the disease in Rhodesia in 1901, including the scientific investigation of it and efforts at control. ➔➔



Bob Reichert

New phone system goes underground

Kenny Kramer, right, Rockefeller's Dedicated Technician from AT&T, talks with a prospective vendor about underground routes to be taken when installing cable for the new phone system. A vendor should be selected to do the job by September, and cable installation is scheduled to begin in October.

From Mainz-Kastel to New York City



Bob Reichert

Patricia E. Mackey

Upon the retirement of Sonya Mirsky as University Librarian this June, Librarian Patricia E. Mackey, who has been a member of The Rockefeller University community for nearly two decades, will assume responsibility for all phases of library operations, including budget planning, personnel administration and information services (reference and data base services).

Mackey will be celebrating her 19th anniversary with the Rockefeller Library on April 17. She came to her present position by an unconventional route. After a year at the University of Maryland, she left college to travel in Europe. While there, she took a job in a library in Mainz-Kastel, Germany (where the Gutenberg Bible was printed). She enjoyed the experience so much that when she returned to the United States she took a job as an interlibrary loan assistant at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. In 1972 she accepted a similar position at this university, and has been here ever since.

While working full-time at Rockefeller, Mackey earned a B.A. in anthropology at Hunter College, taking courses at night, and a master's in library science at Columbia University. Her specialty at Columbia was reference services, an area which still interests her greatly. A series of promotions—which started even before the completion of her master's degree—resulted in Mackey's appointment to librarian in 1985. "Sonya Mirsky was responsible for my advancement here," Mackey says. "She encouraged me every step of the way."

Mackey has several goals she wishes to accomplish in her ex-

panded role. "I'd like to create a service-oriented environment responsive to the information needs of library users," she says. "And I'd like to increase computerization of the library. Although we're keeping a close eye on the bottom line, there are improvements out there which are inexpensive, while very useful."

A member of both the American and New York Library Associations, Mackey says that another of her goals is to interact more with people on campus. "But my most important goal," she adds, "is to maintain the high standards set by Sonya Mirsky. That's quite a challenge."

—by Enid Goldberg

NY Heart Association celebrates 75th at RU today

The New York Heart Association will celebrate the 75th Anniversary of its founding with a day-long conference in Caspary Auditorium today, entitled "Cardiovascular Science and Medicine: From Bench to Bedside." Nobel Laureate Joseph L. Goldstein, of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, and Désiré Collen, of the University of Leuven, Belgium, are among the nine lecturers at the event.

Speakers at the conference will discuss the advances that have taken place in cardiovascular science and medicine since the association was founded, and will consider some of the exciting developments likely to occur in the future. The talks will relate advances in science to the understanding, treatment and prevention of cardiovascular disease.

Professor Jan Breslow, who will preside over the conference's morning session, said, "The American Heart Association this year will spend some 80 million dollars to support research. Of this total, about half is spent by the local affiliates. The New York City affiliate places a very high priority on research, with some 60% of the money raised locally going to support the research grant program. Many grants go to supporting basic scientific projects in the fields of molecular, cellular and developmental biology."

Conference tickets are \$25.00 at the door, and \$15.00 extra for lunch in Abby Aldrich Hall. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. ➡➡

Announcements

Manny Hanny Race deadline nears

The first race of the Manufacturers Hanover Corporate Challenge will be run May 9, and the deadline for signing up for the race is Friday, April 19, according to Robin Maloney, Rockefeller's Associate Controller and team captain. The race, 3.5 miles through Central Park, is meant for every level of runner, including walkers. Each year, approximately 10,000 athletes participate in the event, including many from the university community. There is an entry fee of \$10.00, and participants from Rockefeller will receive a university T-shirt. The second Corporate Challenge Race will be run on June 6; the deadline for application to this race is May 17. Those interested in running should contact Maloney at x7736 for applications.

Last Space Lecture is Tuesday

The last talk in spring's Space Science Lecture Series, "Lunar and Martian Agriculture," will be presented at noon on April 16 in Tower 305. The speaker will be Professor Frank Salisbury of the University of Utah. For information, contact Erich Jarvis, x7733.

Tri-Institutional Recital today

Today at noon the Tri-Institutional Recital Series presents violinist Dmitri Berlinsky and pianist Svetlana Gorokhovich in a free concert in Caspary Auditorium. A native of Leningrad, the 22-year-old Berlinsky is an internationally acclaimed artist, Winner of the 1989 Young Concert Artists International Auditions and the Grand Prize at the 1987 Montreal Violin Competition, among other prizes. Soviet pianist Gorokhovich has performed in solo recitals and chamber music concerts throughout the Soviet Union, Italy and the U.S. At today's recital, the two will perform works of Schnittke, Franck, Tchaikovsky and Bloch.

Mirsky (continued from page 1)

versity Librarian by then-president Joshua Lederberg in 1979. Her duties included not only overall management of the library, but responsibility for special collections as well. She is also the unofficial "historian on call," she says. "I was most likely to know where information was, or who had it." In 1986 she undertook the compilation of a faculty bibliography. It currently has over 25,000 references, a "partial list." "When Dr. Lederberg asked me to do this, he said 'Only you would have the courage to tackle this job,'" she recalls.

Among her accomplishments during her years at Rockefeller, Mirsky counts computerizing the library her most significant. Armed with 18 months of computer courses and countless conversations with experts in the field, she oversaw the computerization of the library's catalog, circulation system and acquisitions.

Mirsky's other achievements include vastly increasing the scope of the library's collection, and—what might become her most tangible contribution to future generations of library users—beginning the process of air conditioning the facility. Floor one is currently being equipped with an air conditioning system. "When I came here in 1949," Mirsky says, "the head of the library at that time assured me that we'd be air conditioned within five years. It's taken a bit more than five years, but at least it's happening."

Asked to sum up her thoughts about her career as a librarian here, Mirsky was quick to reply, "The campus is my home away from home. I may be giving up my title as University Librarian, but the title I'm not giving up is 'Resident Mother Hen.'" She gazed out the window for a while, then added, on a more serious note, "The people here are family. What has motivated me over the years is that I care. I really care. I've been the recipient of much care, and it hasn't been unilateral. That means a lot."

—by Enid Goldberg

Summer Research Assistant List available in Personnel

A booklet compiling resumes of college students currently seeking summer employment at the university may be reviewed in the Personnel Office. This group of over 100 applicants represents (1) students who wrote directly to the university seeking summer lab positions and (2) individuals who previously applied for the SURF Program (Dean's Office). See Mary Ann or Brenda in Personnel to review the resumes for possible placement. ➡➡



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