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### Library Reciprocity Agreement, 1991

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REPORT BY

THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN

ON

THE LIBRARY RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

CORNELL UNIVERSITY MEDICAL COLLEGE

&

MEMORIAL SLOAN-KETTERING CANCER CENTER

To: Mr. Frederick Bohen, Vice President  
From: Patricia E. Mackey, Librarian  
Re: Library reciprocity agreement for RU/CUMC/MSKCC  
Date: 8 April 1991

At your request, in our meeting of March 5, 1991, I have summarized the history of the reciprocity agreement between the libraries of the Rockefeller University (RU), Cornell University Medical College (CUMC) and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC). My summary and recommendations for ameliorating the current agreement are embodied in the accompanying report. In my summary and recommendations, I directed my attention to these specific objectives:

Assessment of the Current Agreement

Administrative Participation

Development of a Tri-institutional Forum for  
the Professional Librarians

Re-establishment of RU VendaCard Sales to  
CUMC/MSKCC Librarians

Meeting these objectives should result in better service to library users of the three institutions.

Should any questions arise concerning the content of this report or the recommendations, I will be glad to discuss these matters with you.

Sincerely,

## Preface

This report is an overview of the cooperative activities and the formalized reciprocity agreement between the Rockefeller University Library and the Cornell Medical College Library covering the years 1973 through 1986. Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center Library was not an original participant in this agreement. They are mentioned in this report only to point out the positive view of how well the agreement can work.

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate the need for a reaffirmation of the cooperation that was once shared by the libraries of Rockefeller and Cornell. There has been some discord for sometime which has deteriorated into a serious problem for Rockefeller personnel when they find it necessary to use the Cornell Library.

This report is not intended as a criticism of the personnel at the Cornell Medical College Library. They inherited certain problems which were never resolved between the the institutions and in their zeal to set new directions, they decided to ignore the problems and the Rockefeller University Library in the process.

It is with great hope that we can once again have a cooperative and meaningful relationship with the Cornell librarians.

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Sonya W. Mirsky

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The prehistory of formal cooperative relations between Cornell University Medical School/New York Hospital and the Rockefeller University libraries dates back to the mid-1930s. The Librarian, Esther Judkins (RU) and Josephine Nichols (CUMC/NYH) met for lunch at least once a month to discuss mutual and individual plans and problems. These included matters from deciding which library would subscribe to which periodical, which will buy a particular book, review binding lists so that both did not send to the binder at the same time titles in demand, to who is going on vacation at what time so that there was a chief librarian available at all times. This informal arrangement was maintained and functioned well for over 30 years.

During much of this period both libraries were relatively small. CUMC/NYH was a "one-person" library; i.e. Miss Nichols did everything. The RU library staff consisted of 3 professional librarians and 3 library pages. Both libraries merely served as storehouses of books and periodicals, providing limited reference and interlibrary loan services.

By the mid 1960s, matters had changed drastically. Cooperative ventures were in the air. Both libraries were members of the Medical Library Center of New York. Interlibrary loans were centralized and semi-automated. Library staffs were larger and more expensive. The first whippers of computerization were heard from the National Library of Medicine. All in all, the need to conserve resources and at the same time expand services began to impose itself on library philosophy.

At this point, both libraries turned to their administrators to establish institutional agreements. The librarians were asked to meet and to propose the details of such a plan.

## 2.1 - Original Proposal for Joint Participation

The first formalized cooperation/reciprocity agreement between the Rockefeller University Library (RUL) and the Cornell University Medical College Library (CUMCL) began in March, 1973. Mr. C. Robin LeSueur, Librarian of the Rockefeller University and Mr. Erich Meyerhoff, Librarian of the Cornell Medical College had some informal discussions and joint formal meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to formulate a plan which would improve the space limitations in both libraries. There had always been a broadly based conviction that an expansion of each library was needed and that joint use of both collections was an essential prerequisite for common planning. This common planning included resource sharing in the areas of reader's services, acquisitions and centralized cataloging.

Several proposals were submitted to the administrators of both institutions for consideration. These proposals ranged from joint construction of a common library building shared by the two institutions to the creation of a Rockefeller-Cornell Cooperative as a local systems base. Achieving economies and improving the utilization of personnel and equipment was the goal of these proposals.

The librarians and administrators, after many lively discussions, finally agreed that constructing a building as a joint project was not feasible for administrative and budgetary reasons. At this point each institution examined a plan for expansion of their own facilities. Rockefeller was able to renovate the lower levels of Welch Hall to alleviate the immediate space problem. However, Cornell did not solve their space problem until many years later. The decision to follow separate paths did not, however, preclude a cooperative program altogether. All the participants decided upon a more practical plan which resulted in the reciprocity agreement that has been in place for 17 years.

## 2.2 - Terms of Agreement

Formulating the original proposal helped to define the institutional, educational and social needs of both organizations. The collections being complementary, that of Rockefeller being primarily biomedical research and Cornell appropriate to medical education, patient care and medical research, it could be clearly demonstrated that there was merit in a joint cooperative program.

The areas best suited for joint cooperation without additional expense was acquisitions and reader's services. Thus, the librarians and administrators of both institutions agreed to the following:

- Cooperative acquisitions and binding activities
- Limited on-site reference service to qualified library users
- Shared participation in the new information networks (BRS; MEDLINE)
- Photoduplicating services

A cooperative program in these areas was implemented immediately and without additional cost to either institution.

A valuable co-operative activity in the area of acquisitions was carried on by Mrs. Mirsky, Associate Librarian of the Rockefeller University Library, and Mr. Meyerhoff, Cornell University Medical College Librarian: telephone consultation preceded the ordering of new periodical subscriptions and of exceptional books, to avoid unnecessary duplication within the two collections.

There was a tacit understanding that the two libraries would alternate sending their commonly held periodical titles out to the bindery. This way, a library user would find these titles available in at least one of the libraries at any given time.

At the time of this reciprocity agreement, Cornell had just become a participant in the National Library of Medicine's computer based systems, as well as the SUNY Biomedical Information Network. Up to this point, all on-site reference assistance for users from another institution was usually of a directional or locational nature. With the advent of these computer networks, reference assistance for Rockefeller personnel required more involvement on the part of the librarians at Cornell until Rockefeller began participation soon thereafter.

Library services available to CUMC personnel at RUL included photocopying, limited reference assistance and limited study space from 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. Library services available to RUL personnel at CUMC included professional reference assistance, photocopying and access to MEDLARS and the SUNY Biomedical Information Network during all hours the the CUMC Library was open.

### 2.3 - Modification of Agreement

The original reciprocity agreement was changed several times during the period 1977 to 1980. There were two significant changes made during these years. One, Memorial Sloan-Kettering became a participant and agreed to all the terms of the agreement. Two, the hours of entry into Welch Hall were changed from 9:00 a.m.-5 p.m. to 24 hours a day for faculty and graduate fellows with research needs. At one point all students were allowed 24 hour access to Welch Hall with proper identification. The documentation file on the reciprocity agreement shows that this was short-lived as it contains letters of complaints from RU faculty and students about the Cornell medical students abuse of their privileges in the use of the RU Library. They were guilty of using an inordinate amount of study space per student, loud talking, radio playing, eating and drinking in the periodical reading room of Welch Hall.



The administrators at CUMC intervened to help RU communicate to the medical students the rationale behind rules which must, of necessity, govern library use. There was improvement only for a short time.

Access to Welch Hall was changed in 1980 to the following arrangement:

1. On-site reference use only of the Rockefeller University Library for research and consultation of periodicals and books not available at the libraries of CUMC or MSKCC.
2. All rules and regulations of the Rockefeller University must be observed.
3. Faculty and graduate students have unlimited access for on-site reference use with proper identification.
4. Medical students have access for on-site reference use Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. with proper identification.

This arrangement is still in effect today. In 1988, RUL began issuing RU identification cards to CUMC/MSKCC faculty and graduate students with research needs. This was done to relieve the security guards on duty in Founders Hall of making the decision which user status was eligible.

### 3. - The Problem Defined

The cooperative agreement between Cornell and Rockefeller, unfortunately, has been deteriorating for several years now. It is difficult to focus in on one particular factor that can explain the deterioration. However, two very important terms of the original agreement were reluctantly accepted by Mr. Meyerhoff and his staff at CUMC. One, reciprocal individual borrowing privileges were never a part of the general agreement. Mr. Meyerhoff felt very strongly that these privileges should have been included. Two, the RU policy on access to Welch Hall was not favorably received by CUMC and its staff. The RU librarians regarded these policies as fundamental to their responsibility and commitment to the RU community. Mr. Meyerhoff and his staff could not seem to accept the fact that these two terms were not up for negotiation.

The policy was necessary for a very important reason. The number of users and the mode of use in each of the libraries differed. In 1973 when the first report was completed, CUMC had a potential of 3,117 users as compared to 650 for RU. The mode of library use affected the policy to a large degree. Those engaged in research and patient care use the library as a source of information. Medical students, and at that time nursing students, used the RU library as a study hall. Delivery time and availability of documents is critical to a physician involved in patient care. The researcher, on the other hand, uses materials differently. Immediacy is not the focal point. The researcher browses through the literature because this in itself can generate ideas. The sheer numbers of potential users from CUMC with individual borrowing privileges would have created a severe availability problem for RU library users.

In June, 1986, Mr. Erich Meyerhoff retired as CUMC Librarian and Dr. Robert Braude was appointed Cornell University Medical College, Loeb Librarian and Assistant Dean of Information Resources. It was at this time that Cornell finally solved its space problems when the William and Mildred Lansdon Biomedical Research Building was completed. It houses the administrative offices of the library and study rooms.

Dr. Braude made a perfunctory attempt at communicating with the RU librarians during his first few months at CUMC. It immediately became clear that his plan for CUMC Library did not include any cooperative participation with RUL or any other neighboring library with the exception of MSKCC. His contact with MSKCC was more through necessity than choice. MSKCC Library pays Cornell an annual fee for cataloging services and they piggy back on the CUMC on-line catalog system.

Several months after his appointment, Dr. Braude named Ms. Carolyn Reid, a librarian from his previous institution, as his assistant. Ms. Reid, Mrs. Mirsky, Ms. Mackey and Mrs. Jeanne Becker, Director of Library Services at MSKCC, had several luncheon meetings in an attempt to revive the cooperative agreement. As usual, Mrs. Becker was agreeable with most of the suggestions made and was willing to cooperate in any way she could. Ms. Reid was rather non-committal during the discussions.

In order to provide some incentive for the success of a renewed agreement, Mrs. Mirsky granted Ms. Reid's request to make the RU VendaCards available to the librarians at MSKCC and CUMC. Availability of the cards for library users from the neighboring institutions would facilitate photocopying at RUL. RUL does not provide charge for photocopy since RU coupons and VendaCards are the method of payment used by our faculty, students and staff. Unfortunately, this agreement was short-lived. After a few months, it became obvious that RU made concessions without any reciprocity on the part of CUMC. So, it was necessary to cancel this agreement.

The American Library Association Code of Ethics prescribes fair, equitable, and unbiased library service. The significant level of dissatisfaction RU users experience at the CUMC Library makes the current situation a serious one. To a person, the complaints from our faculty, students and staff is the same. When they request assistance at CUMC Library and identify themselves as a RU member, they are given very rude treatment.

Fortunately, the cooperative agreement has always worked well between RU and MSKCC from the first day of their participation. The Rockefeller Librarian is an ex-officio member of their library committee and attends quarterly meetings. They communicate any changes in advance that would impact upon our library and our users.

To achieve the same type of 'professional partnership' with Cornell is the goal of the RU librarians. The tri-institutional libraries have unique collections and are obligated to support the intellectual efforts of their users. This philosophy should extend to users of the neighboring institutions as long as the policy of each library is retained. What is greatly needed to revive the cooperative agreement between RU and CUMC is a forum for the free exchange of ideas. To open the line of communication again is vital. This can be done through direct and telephone contact, committees, memoranda, newsletters, etc.

Historically, the reciprocal agreement was limited to certain areas of cooperative activity. The technological advances that have changed the way information is disseminated and participation in consortia should give rise to the question how valid is the current agreement today.

#### 4.- RECOMMENDATIONS

The Rockefeller University Library presents three recommendations to ameliorate the current reciprocity agreement between the libraries of the Rockefeller University, Cornell Medical College, and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

##### RECOMMENDATION 1.:

The administrators from Rockefeller University, Cornell Medical College and Memorial Sloan-Kettering should have a meeting to discuss policies and goals of a new cooperative agreement. A change can only be made with the intervention of the administrators. It cannot happen on the library administrative level.

##### RECOMMENDATION 2:

The tri-institutional librarians should work together to constructively solve individual and collective library problems, and move towards a mutually supportive relationship.

##### RECOMMENDATION 3:

The RU librarians are once again willing to sell RU VendaCards to the librarians at CUMC and MSKCC. This will facilitate photocopying for their qualified personnel when using RU materials.

## APPENDIX

## THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

## LIST OF LIBRARIANS

1903-1935	Lila M. D. Trask
1936-1964	Esther Judkins
1965-1972	Alfred E. Mirsky
1972-1977	C. Robin LeSueur
1977-1991	Sonya Wohl Mirsky
1991-	Patricia E. Mackey