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## **Sonya Mirsky Appointed Librarian**

The Rockefeller University

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## Sonya Mirsky Appointed Librarian

President Seitz has announced the appointment of Sonya Wohl Mirsky as librarian of The Rockefeller University. She succeeds C. Robin Le Seuer, who has been named librarian of the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine of Harvard University. Mr. Le Seuer has been with the University since 1972.

In accepting her new post, Mrs. Mirsky will take primary responsibility for a facility of nearly 180,000 volumes,



housed on six floors of Welch Hall, in the Math/Physics Library in the Tower, and in the Alfred E. Cohn Memorial Library in Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall. The Library has a staff of 17 people working in acquisitions, cataloging, the reading rooms, periodicals, and photocopying. It is one of the few existing libraries—and probably the only university-based library—that is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It has been Mrs. Mirsky's beloved second home for all of her working life.

In 1949, the business manager of what was then The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research called Columbia University in search of a librarian with a science background. Sonya Wohl was the only student who qualified. A year away from her M.S. in library science, which she completed while working at Rockefeller, she had a B.S. from City College, where she had concentrated on the sciences. In high school she had been one of the first Westinghouse Science Talent Search winners. She began as assistant librarian and became associate librarian in 1961.

The scope of her work grew as the Library grew. Between 1957 and 1959, she was in charge of a monumental re-

cataloging project that resulted in the first systematized classification of the Library's entire collection—then about 30,000 volumes. Around the same time, she took over reference services, which at Rockefeller is no ordinary job. "By the time a scientist comes to us with a problem, he or she has already dug deep in the literature. None of the questions we get is routine. They're always hard and meaty. That's when I really feel like a librarian, and I'm not happy until I find the answer." As a matter of course, she reads scientific journals daily, devours bibliographies, has taken graduate courses, confers regularly with the laboratories, and forgets nothing. Many a questioner has been startled to get an off-the-top-of-her-head answer in which she quotes a paper's title, author, journal; volume, date, and page number.

Mrs. Mirsky is directly responsible for 90 percent of the Library's acquisitions, as well as having a significant say in its fiscal management. Twenty-five years ago, she set up an arrangement with the Strand Book Store whereby they hold all the science and medical books they receive for her to look at before anyone else. From these she makes a selection—usually about 60 volumes a week—which she buys at a 50 percent discount. More than half the Library's books are acquired this way, many of them as much as two months ahead of publication date. "We have all the latest science books. But," she adds, "we also have a copy of Hooke's *Micrographia* dating from 1665."

In her view, much credit for the Library's achievements belongs to Alfred E. Mirsky, who served as librarian from 1965 to 1972 while also pursuing a distinguished career in biochemical and physiological research. The two were married in 1967. Until his death in 1974, their vacations were spent traveling through Europe, the Middle East, and Asia in response to a shared passion for art history and archeology. Among his many other achievements, Dr. Mirsky was the founder of the Christmas Lectures for high school students, now named in his honor. Mrs. Mirsky currently handles arrangements for this exceptional program, which each year fills Caspary Auditorium with enthusiastic young scientists-in-the-making.

As she assumes her new duties, Mrs. Mirsky's main concern is the Library's pressing need for more space, for which the 1973 expansion and renovation provided only temporary respite. She is working hard on plans that she hopes will be financially feasible without curtailing necessary growth in size and

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## PERSONALS

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Born, October 20, to Louise Ferraro, bookkeeping clerk, and her husband, Joseph, twin boys, Daniel Anthony and Nicholas Thomas, their seventh and eighth children. The Ferraros have three other boys and three girls. Mrs. Ferraro's mother is Emily Getting, a helper in the laboratory of Professor Henry G. Kunkel.

Dr. Judith R. Tennant, associate executive editor of the *Journal of Cell Biology*, was married on September 24 to Franklin M. Haines, Jr., an attorney.

### Lancefield Club

In honor of the long and distinguished career of Professor Rebecca C. Lancefield, the members of the Streptococcal Club voted on October 9 at their annual meeting to change the name to the Lancefield Club.

Dr. Lancefield, whose career at The Rockefeller began in 1918, is coleader of the University's laboratory of bacteriology and immunology. Her lifelong work with streptococci has been directed entirely toward an understanding of the antigenic composition and immunology of these pathogenic microorganisms, whose serological classification is based on these studies.

The Streptococcal Club was an outgrowth of the Commission on Streptococcal and Staphylococcal Diseases of the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board. When the commission was dissolved in 1972, its members continued as an informal discussion group (as distinguished from the continuing international forum) to exchange ideas and review developments in the field of streptococcal biology and medicine.

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service. Of the Library's service to its users she says, "We do well, but we should do better. Wherever I can, I would like to introduce additional techniques that will make it possible for our staff to spend less time with files and more time with people." Despite her impatience with "files," the fact remains that the Rockefeller Library has a cataloging backlog time of never more than 36 hours, as opposed to anywhere from 6 to 18 months in other libraries. Mrs. Mirsky's philosophy is simple: "You can't work in an exceptional place with exceptional people without providing exceptional service."