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## NEWS AND NOTES 1991, NOVEMBER 22

The Rockefeller University

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## Search committees active

### New investigator appointed to RU faculty

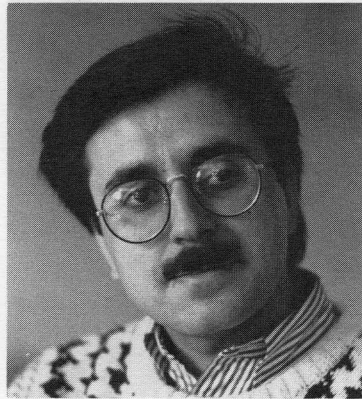
A researcher who is currently the principal investigator of the Neural Computation Group at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, will join the Rockefeller faculty next summer as an assistant professor and head of laboratory.

He is Joseph J. Atick, the first faculty member appointed from outside the university since the recruiting program was launched last summer.

"Joseph Atick's appointment is great news," said Rockefeller President David Baltimore. "It's a beginning for Rockefeller University in a new and exciting area of science."

Atick's research area is computational neuroscience, a burgeoning field concerned with finding testable mathematical theories that predict how the nervous system is organized, and how it computes its perceptual problems. His research focuses on the sensory pathways in general and the visual system in particular. The ultimate goal of such research, Atick says, is to understand the nervous system as a whole.

Atick, 27, dropped out of high school because he found the course work boring and studied physics and mathematics on his own. One of the results of these studies was a college-level physics textbook Atick completed at age 16. The book attracted the attention of Stanford physicist Stanley Hanna, who invited Atick to explore the possibility of studying there. After a round of tests, Atick was admitted to Stanford as a graduate student in physics. He received his Master's degree in 1985 and his Ph.D. two



Joseph Atick

years later. He joined the Institute for Advanced Study as a postdoctoral fellow in 1987 and was made a long-term member in 1988.

Atick was inspired to move into the neurosciences from high-energy physics by his enduring fascination with the nervous system. "My work has always been driven both by experimentation and by first principles," he said, adding that Rockefeller—where investigation is shaped by the same two considerations—will provide a congenial atmosphere for his research.

"Rockefeller is a unique place, which has always had researchers at the frontiers of experimentation," he said. "To be close to where the action is in the neurosciences will stimulate my work, and drive me toward my goals. I'm very enthusiastic about the possibilities for collaboration."

### Student mugged at 65th and York

Scott Dougan, a fourth-year graduate student in the DiNardo lab, was mugged at gunpoint recently on the corner of 65th St. and York Avenue.

Dougan was walking on the west side of the street at 11:30 p.m., Fri., Nov. 8, when two men pretending to use the phone accosted him. One pulled a gun. After searching him and taking his wallet and keys, they told him to walk in the direction he came from. Dougan was not injured.

### Group gets tips on staying well abroad

Sixty-five friends and benefactors of RU attended the Trusts and Estate Committee Dinner last Tuesday. Frederick A. Terry, Jr., partner at Sullivan and Cromwell and chair of the committee, hosted the event.

After the reception, President David Baltimore introduced the

### Sister libraries update pact

*Agreement allows borrowing during trial period*

A new agreement among the Tri-Institutional libraries enables members of the Rockefeller community to borrow books from Cornell University Medical College and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center during a six-month trial period. Similarly, members of the other institutions will be able to borrow books from Rockefeller during that time.

"The librarians—Memorial Sloan-Kettering's Jeanne Becker, Cornell's Robert Braude, and I—decided that the time had come to work more closely together," said Patricia Mackey, Rockefeller librarian. "Pooling our resources will enable each of us to keep costs down and to provide better service to our users. I think we all hope that reciprocal borrowing can become a permanent arrangement."

Cornell's collection, which comprises 96,000 books and 463,000 journals, will be open to anyone from Rockefeller or Memorial Sloan-Kettering who registers with Cornell's book circulation desk. Because of their smaller staffs and more focused collections, RU and Memorial Sloan-Kettering will limit inter-institutional borrowing to permanent faculty, postdocs, research associates, and graduate fellows who demonstrate a need for the material.

In addition, the new agreement will make it easier for Rockefeller researchers to use the other libraries' facilities:

- Cornell's and Memorial Sloan-Kettering's on-line computer catalogs are now available on some Rockefeller terminals. Researchers interested in using this service should call Doug Many, library systems analyst, x8906.
- Rockefeller researchers now have the option of opening an account at Cornell for photocopying. Application forms are available at Rockefeller's library or Cornell's Photoduplication Services (one level below the library); forms should be returned to Cornell's Photoduplication Services.
- Photocopy cards for use in the Memorial Sloan-Kettering library can be purchased there at the library desk.

Similarly, Rockefeller's catalog is on-line at Cornell and Memorial Sloan-Kettering. RU photocopy cards are now sold at the two libraries.

The new agreement builds on a tradition of cooperation among the libraries which dates back to the 1930s. In the 1970s, the relationship was formalized in a pact that allowed members of the institutions on-site access to each other's collections.

"It is important for the community to be aware that it is still dangerous in this neighborhood, even though we generally ignore this fact," said Dougan.

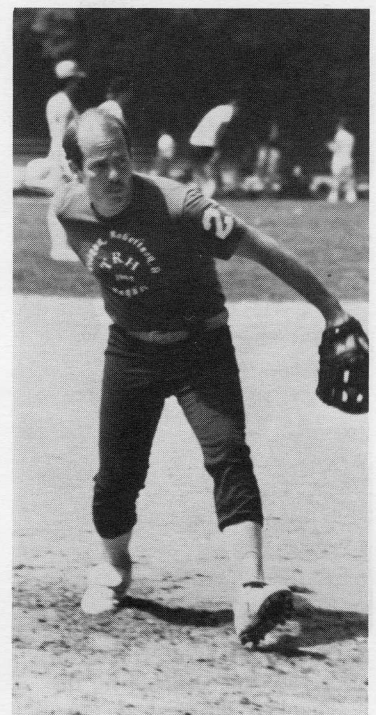
Joseph Nekola, director of Security, said: "Even though this neighborhood is among the safest in New York, individuals should remain alert, especially at night. Be sure to report all incidents to Security. The police base their

*See Student, Page 2*

2 Security gives tips on safety

3 RU scientist advises those on the move

4 Library invites reviews of journals



Why is David Foster frowning? To find out, see Letter to the Editor, page 2.





Rockefeller Security Guard Alberto Coats looks down York Ave. Security recommends that you ask a guard to keep an eye on you if you are leaving campus late at night.

### Security tips from Joe Nekola

## Keeping alert ranks as number-one safety rule

Individuals can minimize the chance of becoming targets for crime by staying alert and taking action if they notice anything suspicious, advises Joseph Nekola, director of Security.

"Criminals do not consider an alert person to be an easy victim," says Nekola. "The casual mugger wants to have the advantage of surprise."

In addition to staying aware of one's surroundings, Nekola recommends that Rockefeller faculty and staff follow some simple precautions:

- When leaving the campus late at night, tell the security guard at the

gate where you are going and ask him or her to keep an eye on you.

- Use a taxi at night. Security personnel will assist you in hailing one.

- Avoid poorly lit, less-traveled side streets in favor of main thoroughfares.

- Alert Security personnel immediately if you see someone suspicious on or near campus.

- If you are the victim of a forcible robbery or if a weapon is involved, do not resist. Try to remain calm and composed.

- Be wary of strangers who try to engage you in conversation. This is a common ploy used by muggers and

con artists in order to give them an opportunity to size you up and evaluate conditions in the immediate area.

- If you feel that you are being followed, change direction. If necessary go into a store or a building that has a doorman.

- Women should carry handbags close to the body, not dangling from the shoulder. It should be possible to release the purse if necessary.

- Be especially alert when conducting business at banks.

- Minimize the amount of money you carry and keep expensive jewelry out of sight.

## Student mugged at 65th St. and York Ave.

(continued from page 1)

deployment on statistics. If the statistics show there has been no crime, they will not treat the neighborhood as a priority."

Nekola has received a commitment from the 19th Precinct to assign more officers to the area. Security is also evaluating the installation of additional lighting along York Avenue.

The number of assaults involving Rockefeller faculty or staff in the area around campus has remained constant during the last 10 years that records have been kept.

"There are three or four incidents every year—mostly unrelated and late at night," Nekola said. "If anything, the number of assaults has declined during the last two years."

Nekola noted that statistics show theft increases in the weeks before Christmas.

Muggings are not limited to the area around Rockefeller. Jeffrey Price, postdoctoral associate in the Young lab, was robbed at 10:30 p.m. the same night at 117th and Broadway—at Columbia's campus—by a large group claiming to have a gun.

"It was only the second time I visited Columbia," Price said. "I'm not planning to go back any time soon."

One of the muggers hit Price during the course of the robbery, but Price was not seriously hurt.

(See related story, **Keeping alert**, this page.)

## Thanksgiving comes early to RU

Rockefeller's holiday season got off to an early start this year with the annual Thanksgiving luncheon, which took place yesterday (Nov. 21) in both the cafeteria and the 17th floor dining room. Amidst sprightly pumpkins and gourds, diners feasted on a meal that included turkey with corn bread dressing, candied yams, split pea soup, and a vast selection of inviting desserts—a repast that Food Services Director Heath

Braunstein said upheld the Rockefeller holiday tradition, and provided excellent value (\$5.00 for the entire meal in the cafeteria; \$5.50 on the 17th floor).

Also true to tradition, Food Services gave away 15 turkeys to those with specially marked plates. Food Services' next contribution to the season's festivities will be the annual winter holiday luncheon—date and raffle surprise to be announced.

## Letter to the Editor:

I am writing to address a critical omission from the rest of the article describing the rise and fall of the RU Scientists. In the course of editing the piece all mention of the team's pitcher, David Foster, was deleted. Despite intense debate concerning the actual number of walks issued per score and the impact of errors on Dave's ERA, the team was unanimous in their opinion that Dave deserved mention. This is not to say that the Scientists don't share the ambivalence demonstrated by the editor.

Nevertheless, in the interests of justice and the future success of the team a picture of Dr. Foster is enclosed. The picture was taken while Dave was pitching for a rival team.

Jeffrey Friedman,  
Captain, RU Scientists

*Editor's Note: The accounts of Foster's performance on the baseball field were so astounding that management wanted to verify them before putting them in print. News&Notes will follow his career with interest.*

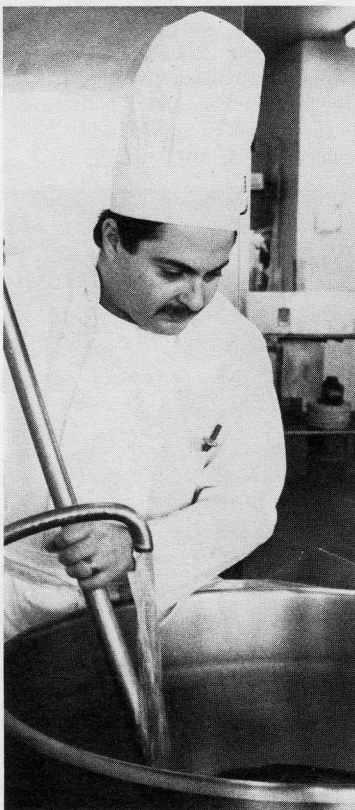
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Chef Clifford Sussman prepares split pea soup for the Thanksgiving meal.



# On the road? RU scientist reveals how to travel and stay well

by Susan Blum

The lights came up in Caspary Auditorium as the Rockefeller scientist finished his talk. The screen, aglow just moments before with facts and figures, turned blank. The audience rustled, and then relaxed.

"We have time for a few questions," the researcher said, gesturing first to a woman seated in a middle row. She pondered, formulated her query, and asked, "Can you tell us where it's safe to eat sushi?"

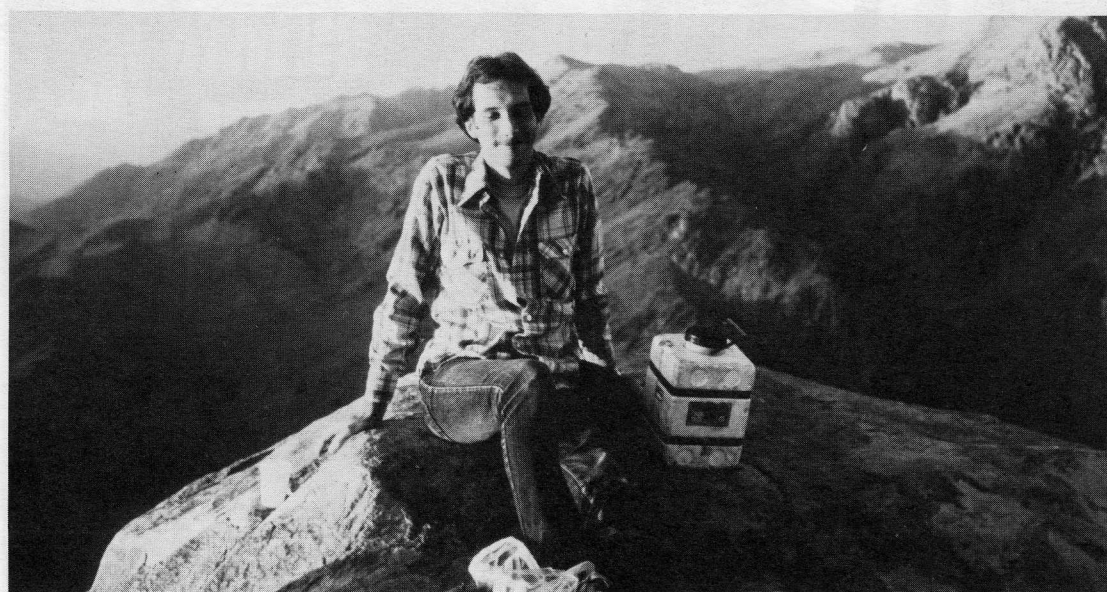
It was not exactly the kind of question typically posed to a Rockefeller scientist. But then this was not a typical scientific presentation. Last Thursday, Thomas Sakmar paused from his research on signal transduction to talk about another of his interests—how to stay well while traveling. His presentation to a group of friends and supporters of Rockefeller covered such topics as safe food and drink, prudent immunizations, and region-specific diseases.

Sakmar's interest in travel medicine goes back to his days as a medical student at the University of Chicago. During his training, he took some clinical electives in Taiwan; after the courses were over, he traveled widely in Southeast Asia. Wherever he wandered, people would ask him for tips about safe and healthy traveling. Though he was no expert in the field, his medical training gave him a leg up on many of his interlocutors. "It's amazing how popular you become when you know even a little about travel medicine," he told *News&Notes* in an interview after the presentation.

Once back in the United States, Sakmar recounted, he decided to learn more about travel health and to publish what he'd learned in a book co-written with two University of Chicago colleagues. The first edition of their *Health Guide for International Travelers* was published in 1986. Reprinted twice, it is now being revised to keep up with changing conditions.

## Preparation is key

A main point of the book—and of last Thursday's talk—is that healthy travel is largely a matter of preparation and common sense. "If you travel to Western Europe, health issues are not a major concern," said Sakmar. To prepare for a voyage to Europe, he advised, travelers should make sure their routine immunizations are up to date; take care of any unattended medical or dental problems; pack a



Thomas Sakmar, Rockefeller investigator and co-author of *Health Guide for International Travelers*, on a mountaintop in Egypt during one of his voyages off the beaten track

spare pair of eyeglasses and a backup cache of prescription medications; and just generally plan ahead sensibly for possible contingencies.

But travel to less-developed countries or regions in Africa, Asia, and South America presents special challenges, Sakmar said. Depending on the country, it may be advisable—or even required—to undergo a round of immunizations for such diseases as yellow fever, cholera, typhoid fever, and hepatitis B. A complete vaccination series can take as long as eight weeks for proper administration, so advance planning is a must. "The final decisions about which immunizations to get should be made in consultation with your doctor, who will review your travel plans, your medical history, and information about recent world health developments," Sakmar told the group. In some cases, he added, it may be necessary to visit a specialized traveler's clinic, such as the one at The New York Hospital, to obtain the special certification of immunization required by some countries.

Malaria is a major health concern for travelers going off the beaten track to regions in Asia, Africa, and South America, Sakmar reported. In the late 1970s, malaria was not a serious problem for travelers. Mosquito eradication programs were at their peak, and a drug called chloroquine effectively prevented and treated the disease. But in the 1980s, economic pressures put an end to many eradication programs. To make matters even worse, at about the same time a chloroquine-resistant strain of malaria began to spread from refugee camps in Cambodia throughout Asia and

then into Africa and South America. Now, Sakmar said, "Malaria is a problem for travelers almost everywhere in the tropics." About 150 Western travelers contract the disease each year, he told the group.

## Malaria hot line offers help

For those in the audience, which included lawyers, executives and scientists, these concerns were of more than academic interest. Whether for business or pleasure, many of them travel widely, sometimes to areas where malaria is endemic. Sakmar advised them that they could learn the latest epidemiological data about the disease by calling a special malaria hot line maintained by the Centers for Disease Control at 404-332-4555.

He also discussed a new anti-malarial drug, called Lariam, which has been on the market for about a year. Lariam presents a potential dilemma that underscores the complexities inherent in the growth of international travel. Sakmar reported that some doctors in developing nations, especially in Africa, oppose the use of Lariam as preventive medicine against malaria. They fear its use will hasten the development of resistant malarial strains, which will make it more difficult, or even impossible, to use the drug to treat the disease.

"It's a dilemma," Sakmar said. "Physicians want to do the best for each individual patient, and that means prescribing the drug for prevention. But what are the public health consequences? As yet, we simply don't know enough about the drug to say."

Another disease that is making

gains in South America is cholera. The number of cases in the Western hemisphere soared from zero in 1989 to 258,000 by July, 1991, Sakmar reported. "Cholera is not a significant risk to informed travelers," he said, "but uninformed travelers may be at risk."

One important piece of information is whether cholera is rampant in the region a traveler plans to visit. Local authorities are not always reliable sources of this information, Sakmar advised. A better information source is the Centers for Disease Control's Traveler's Hotline, at 404-332-4559, which offers all manner of health and safety information for travelers. (As noted above, the Centers for Disease Control maintains a separate line to field questions about malaria.)

## Don't drink the water

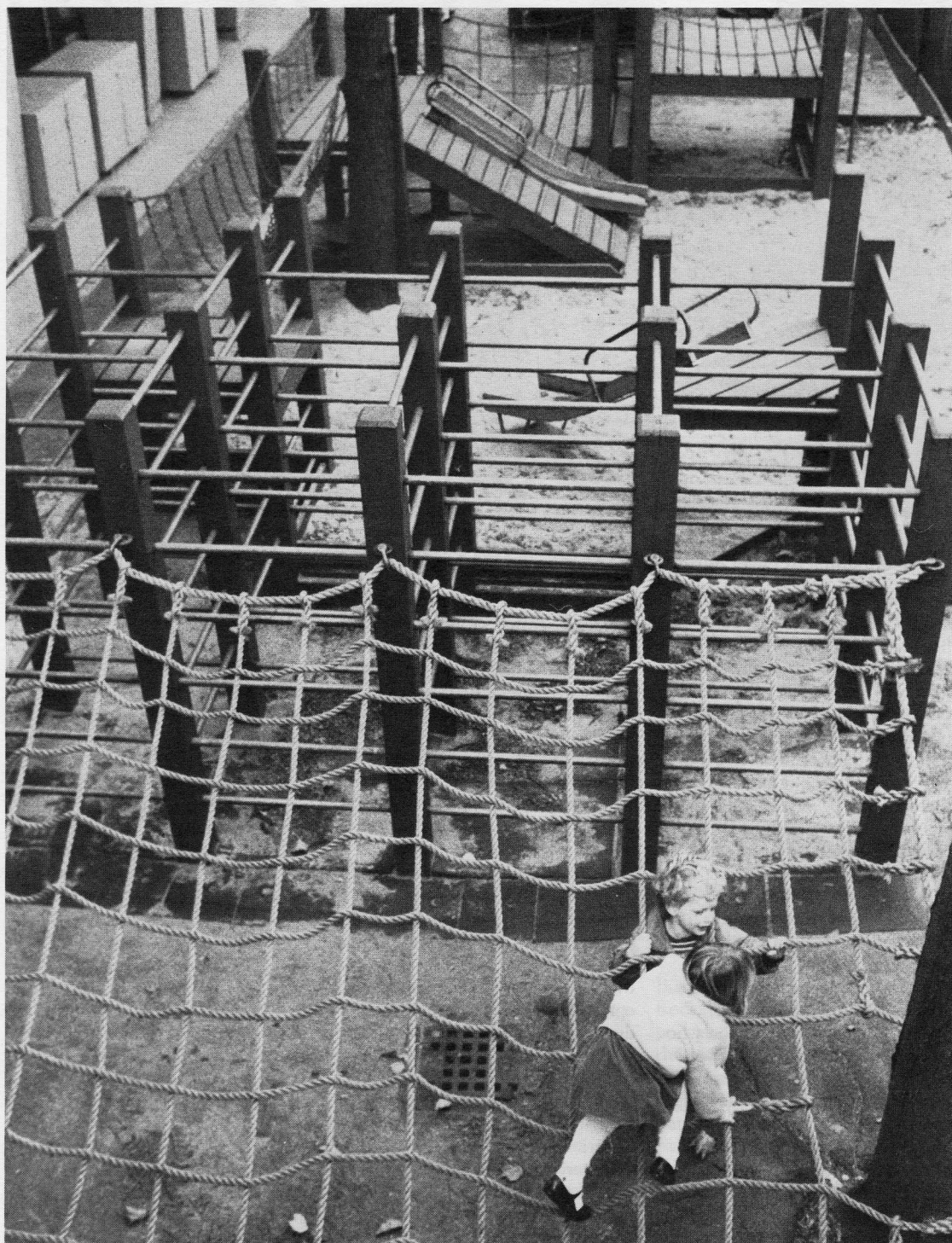
If a region is plagued by cholera, the wary traveler must know how to avoid the disease. Although a vaccine against cholera is available, it is not totally effective. Therefore, because cholera is acquired from consuming contaminated food or water, travelers should be very careful about what they eat and drink. Bottled, carbonated water is a must ("don't even rinse your mouth with tap water or use ice cubes," Sakmar advised) and raw fish and shellfish are taboo. Such caution is advisable in any undeveloped area—even when cholera is not a threat—as poor sanitary conditions make it risky to consume unprocessed water and raw or undercooked food.

So where is it safe to eat raw foods? "I eat my sushi right here on First Avenue," Sakmar said.



## Corners

Robert Reichert



The Children's School playground offers tots a domestic jungle to explore.

## Potpourri

### Jeopardy

Craig Rhyne—the son of Sheila Rhyne, secretary in the Joel E. Cohen lab—will appear on the show *Jeopardy* tonight (Nov. 22) on Channel 7 at 7:00 p.m.

### Lunchtime film

PBS's 60-minute *Cajun Country: Don't Drop the Potato* is hosted by folklorist Alan Lomax. Lomax traces the history of the Cajun people, French-speaking Louisianians whose culture is full of tall tales

and zesty zydeco music. The film will show Dec. 11, at noon, in Tower 305. Admission is free.

### Lecture

President David Baltimore spoke to the New York Society for the Study of Blood on "Genes Involved in Lymphoid Neoplasia," Tues., Nov. 19, in Caspary Hall.

### Noon Recital

Harris Goldsmith, pianist, author, critic, and musicologist will perform

works by Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert at today's (Nov. 22) Tri-Institutional Noon Recital in Caspary Auditorium.

### Sunday film

*M* (1930, Fritz Lang) will be shown in Caspary Auditorium at 7:30 p.m., Sun., Nov. 24.

### Holiday for News&Notes

*News&Notes* will not be published Thanksgiving week. The next issue will be Dec. 6.

## RU library seeks reviews

Those who use the library's Periodicals Reading Room may have noticed that a kiosk in the corner now contains about a dozen scientific journals marked "SAMPLE." The kiosk is a new method for the library to get input on which new journal titles are important to researchers on campus.

"We hope for broad participation in the journal review program," said Patricia Mackey, librarian. "With the rapid escalation of serial prices, we must be very prudent about adding new titles so that we get the most for our dollar."

Attached to each issue is a form to record the reviewer's name and opinion on whether the library should subscribe to the title. Each journal remains on display for four weeks.

## Season brings turkey—and delays

In addition to bringing turkey, potatoes, and pie, the holiday season can mean delays in receiving supplies and mail.

Rockefeller's Purchase and Supply gives a few tips for ordering during the busy weeks ahead:

- Allow plenty of time when placing an order with an outside vendor;
- Indicate the precise date that the supplies are needed on the purchase order form;
- If items are needed on an urgent basis do not write "rush"—this is too vague. Instead, indicate a mode of shipment (Federal Express, Airborne) and next- or second-day delivery.

Allow extra time for mail to arrive as well—the Rockefeller Mail Room advises sending letters at least two weeks before they need to arrive at their destination.

## Get out your calendar

Everyone on campus is invited to the Holiday Festivity hosted by David Baltimore and Alice Huang, Tues., Dec. 17, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. on the 17th floor of Tower. There will be food, drink, and caroling. Barbara Kazmierczak, biomedical fellow in the Zinder-Model lab, will play piano.