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Memorandum To The Faculty, 1973

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THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

New York, N. Y. 10021

MEMORANDUM TO THE FACULTY

FROM: The Library.

In 1960 the History of Science Society sponsored a Conference on Science Manuscripts in an attempt to draw attention to the problems of the acquisition, preservation, and future use of the "unofficial papers" of scientists - their lecture notes, laboratory notes, personal correspondence, and private diaries - as well as of their published works. Interest in the unofficial papers of scientists is part of the remarkable flowering in recent years of public and academic interest in the history of science as a broad subject related not only to science, but also to the social and economic structure, education, medical practice and government.

Among the proposals that grew out of this innovative Conference was one that institutions be encouraged to set up archives, as repositories for their institutional records, and as natural locations for the scientific and personal papers of their tenured Faculty. For the past two years The Rockefeller University has been engaged in implementing this proposal. The various papers and records already on deposit in the Library are being organized and analyzed by the Assistant Librarian for Archives, Mrs. Ruth Sternfeld.

To be effective, such an archival collection must include both the personal papers and the professional output of each scientist. Personal papers relate a scientist's academic career to his total interests, offering intimate contact with a mind and a personality, and mirroring the contemporary social and scientific background.

An essential preliminary to successful archival programs is reaching the scientist so that he will appreciate the need for his participation. Modern scientific education and training does not always reveal the degree to which disputation and serendipity have affected scientific discovery, nor the degree to which present concepts were formulated from the final synthesis of ideas once deemed to be quite incompatible.

The primary records of research activities and the correspondence between individual scientists are the elements of such a synthesis , illuminating the bare-bones record of a published scientific paper. Political figures frequently have a sense of history which persuades them to preserve their own unofficial papers, but ask a scientist for his "papers" and the result most often is a sheaf of reprints already in general distribution.

At The Rockefeller University , each scientist is important, and it is here, where his contributions to science were evolved, that future scholars will expect to find his personal record of his own work.

With an eye to the future, and with most profound respect for the past, we urge the members of The Rockefeller University Faculty to consider their unofficial papers as important documentary sources which The University has great interest in preserving, not as relics, but as important parts of an analyzed collection arranged for the use of scholars.

We urge you to consider the periodic transfer of major segments of your papers to the Archives, and the inclusion in your will of a clause leaving your remaining papers to The Rockefeller University. Mutually-satisfactory arrangements can be made to provide reasonable restrictions upon the use, reproduction, and publication rights, though we ask that the Archives staff shall be authorized to make the papers as available as possible to qualified scholars.

A visit to the Archives Office on the Third Floor of Welch Hall will enable Mrs. Sternfeld to demonstrate for you what has been accomplished so far, and to discuss with you the transmission of your own papers to the Archives of The Rockefeller University.

Mr. C.R. LeSueur ,
Librarian.
January, 1973.