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Dear Tracy:

I very much appreciated your warm letter of January 24th.

I wished I could have anticipated, and spared, the anxieties expressed by Dave Perkins and yourself about the preservation of archives. This is a point that has upset me a great deal in years past. I wished that there could have been some way to forestall the disappearance of the records and correspondence of people like Francis Ryan, David Bonner, and the great bulk of the material from O.T. Avery, Ed Tatum and George Beadle. These are just some of the particular examples that I happen to know about where the authors were either careless about history, or their colleagues were, or as in Avery's case where he was bent on being sure that essentially no papers survived.

Together with Harriet Zuckerman, and in some other contexts, I already have been deeply into some biographical and historical inquiries where my own records have been very useful, and I have no intention of allowing them to decay in any way. I have kept essentially all my personal papers and correspondence since September 1947, and while it will be a major headache I plan to move all of that with me to Rockefeller University. Some of the Departmental documents may be more appropriately lodged in the University's archives here. As a general strategy, where universities are willing and able to undertake the responsibilities for preserving these kinds of papers I would encourage that tack. Collections like the one oriented to genetics at the APS may end up being insufficiently interested in the institutional history in other respects.

Among the other tragedies that I have to record along that line is that the Stanford Medical School seems to have destroyed its own institutional memory from about 1950 on, with the exception of what may still be preserved in the archives of some of the foundations who were helpful in planning the new Medical School. Fortunately, I had kept a set of the records of the Executive Committee from 1959, although somewhat intermittently, and they will be properly archived.

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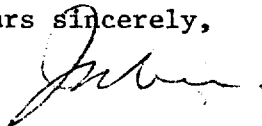
Another tip that may be helpful to other investigators is that, at several institutions, the News Bureau keeps the best set of records on individual professors within the limits of the kinds of things they collect. One may have to hustle to be sure that these kinds of files are not discarded a few years after the departure of notable faculty members from the institution.

Back to my own records: I am still interested in working with them and therefore will want them close to hand at Rockefeller. The University has a diligent interest in the Rockefeller Archive Center, and this is undoubtedly where the overall mass of material will eventually be deposited.

I am just delighted to know of your own interest in this general matter; and by all means if there is anything that I can do to be of further assistance please let me know. I had seriously thought about writing an editorial for Science on the general subject and may yet do that in the reasonably near future.

We are looking forward to a very challenging new task and environment. I certainly hope that when you find yourself in New York, you'll think of Abbey Aldrich Rockefeller Hall as a nice place to stay -- and I mention that as a real incentive to try and look us up.

Yours sincerely,



P.S. On the question of books, I think it would be a very good idea if the APS were simply to circularize the major university biological and medical libraries, which I believe are often tempted to throw away their older editions of books of the kind you mentioned.

This should be self-evident, but the items that were not on the explicit list attached to your letter are: laboratory notebooks and class and lecture notes.

I was very lucky indeed to get a set of the notes that Carlton Schwerdt had kept on Ed Tatum's course in spring 1941. These gave material corroboration to George Beadle's recollections and I was able to cross check them against the notebooks that had found their way to the Rockefeller archives.

JL:ek

cc: David Perkins