

News, Notes, and Queries

John Symons' Retirement

With the retirement of John Symons as Curator of Early Printed Books, the Wellcome Library loses its longest serving member and the chronicler of its development from a private collection to the world's leading library of the history of medicine. After reading *Greats* at Oxford, and attending the library school at University College London, he joined the Wellcome staff in 1968 as an Assistant Librarian, specializing in early printed books. Here he stayed, succeeding Harold Denham as Chief Cataloguer in 1982, and gaining an unrivalled knowledge of the bibliography of medicine. He was joint compiler of the third volume of the Wellcome Catalogue of Books printed before 1850, and was responsible for its continuation, in progress, and for the revised reprint of the earlier volumes. His own period of service included both the computerizing of the Library holdings and the incorporation of the Library's single largest acquisition of early books, those from the library of the Medical Society of London. The clarity and accuracy of the Wellcome catalogues, as reviewers gratefully noted, make them the standard work of reference. Only those who have themselves prepared such catalogues can properly judge the depth of learning needed for each apparently simple entry, and John's expertise has earned him the respect and admiration of fellow bibliographers across the world. Nor should one forget his contributions to exhibition catalogues, and his lectures on medical bibliography to outside audiences.

He has always been eager to place his learning at the service of scholars, although his initial response to questions, at once both abrupt and precise, may have appeared formidable at first to new readers, but they soon learned to appreciate what he could offer them. Professors

or humble medical students might find themselves introduced to relevant material they never knew existed or given instant instruction in tracing the history of a Wellcome book from the various hands of earlier librarians. Few can have known the contents of a major library as well as he; generations of stackmen have been grateful for his knowing where a volume might have been wrongly placed on a shelf.

John Symons' affection for the Wellcome Library extended also to its past librarians. His brief, and characteristically modest, history of the Library, published in 1993, only hinted at the many ways in which he had sought out members of staff, some from the 1920s, and their families, and collected documents and reminiscences in order to build up a picture of what it was like to work under the benevolent tyranny of Henry Wellcome or in the straitened circumstances of the 1950s. The records he collected will enable a future historian to write a fascinating story, in which John's own achievements will be properly chronicled. More importantly, he saw his role as more than a gatherer of information: he became a friend to staff long-retired, who were grateful for his concern and for the contact he enabled them to maintain with their old institution.

He will not disappear yet from the library, although he may now enjoy, with his wife Lenore, more visits to his favourite Greek islands, for he will be occupied in putting the final touches to the last section of the Printed Catalogue. Its completion will be a fitting monument to his (and, as he would also insist, others') devoted work over a lifetime of bibliographical scholarship.

Vivian Nutton

Call for Papers

ASHM – 2006

Health and Medicine in History: East – West Exchange
2–4 November 2006, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

The conference proposes to understand the significance of issues related to health and medicine in Asia with emphasis on the exchange of medical ideas, techniques and tools between Asia and Europe. Different civilizations and cultures in Asia have very advanced medical traditions, as has been the case in Europe. How did they interact? What were the contours of this interaction, its limitations and impact? How can one account for the waxing and waning of oriental romance and appreciation, of derision and contempt unleashed during the long drawn cultural encounter and exchange? What are the methodological perils of narrativizing such shifts and turns? The focus can be on exchange not only in terms of Asia and Europe but also within Asia and different cultural zones constituting a particular region. The period covers the distant past to contemporary times. Scholars are invited to present their papers under the rubric outlined above. The contributors may like to pick from the following

sub-themes: medical traditions and practices in different cultural zones; comparative study of medical ideas and institutions; medical education and research; perceptions of epidemics and disease; health and population discourse; sanitation and healthcare; medical technology: tools and techniques; pharmacology and drug development; mental health and sickness; and medical ethics.

The deadline for submitting abstracts is 30 November 2005; that for full papers 15 September 2006. Hard copies and electronic versions of the abstracts and later full papers will be required. There will be no registration fee and full local hospitality will be provided. But the organizers regret their inability to arrange for air fares. Contact address: Deepak Kumar, Z.H. Centre for Educational Studies, School of Social Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067, India; e-mail: ashm206@rediffmail.com; tel.: 91-11-26704535; fax: 91-11-26717586.

William H Welch Medal, 2006
Call for Nominations

The William H Welch Medal is named in honour of a major American figure in the history of medicine and public health, who was among the first faculty at the Johns Hopkins medical school. The Medal was first presented in 1950, to Henry Sigerist, and is awarded to one or more authors of a book (excluding edited volumes) of outstanding scholarly merit in the field of medical history published during the five calendar years preceding the award. The

Medal will be presented at the next annual meeting of the American Association for the History of medicine, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 4–7 May 2006. The chair of the Welch Medal Committee, Heather Munro Prescott, PhD, welcomes suggestions of books to consider for the award. To nominate a book, contact Dr Prescott at 8 Brikham Way, Burlington, CT 06013, USA (e-mail: prescott@ccsu.edu). Deadline for nominations: 31 October 2005.

Pressman-Burroughs Wellcome Award, 2006

This award honours Jack D Pressman, PhD, a distinguished historian of medicine and Associate Professor of the History of the Health Sciences at the University of California, San Francisco, at the time of his early and unexpected death in June 1997. The award and stipend of \$2,500 is given in even-numbered years for outstanding work in twentieth-century history of medicine or medical science, as demonstrated by the completion of the PhD and a proposal to turn the dissertation into a publishable monograph.

The PhD must have been completed and the degree granted within the last five years (i.e., 2001–2005). The application must include a curriculum vitae, the dissertation abstract, a one-page summary of the proposed book; a description (not exceeding two pages) of the

work to be undertaken for publication; and two letters of support from faculty members knowledgeable about the applicant's dissertation.

The award will be presented at the 2006 annual meeting of the AAHM, to be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 4–7 May. The application, including all supporting materials, must be postmarked by 31 December 2005 and addressed to the Chair of the Pressman-Burroughs Wellcome Committee, Jeffrey P Brosco, MD, PhD, Department of Pediatrics, University of Miami-School of Medicine, PO Box 016820, Miami, FL 33101, USA (jbrosco@miami.edu). More information may be obtained from the AAHM website (www.histmed.org) or from the Committee Chair.

J Worth Estes Award, 2006

This award was established in honour of J Worth Estes, MD, in recognition of his many years of invaluable contributions to the American Association for the History of Medicine and to scholarship in the history of medicine. The award is made annually for the best published paper in the history of pharmacology during the previous two years, whether appearing in a journal or a book collection of papers.

For the purpose of this award, the history of pharmacology will be defined broadly to include ancient and traditional *materia medica*, folk medicines, herbal medicines, the pharmaceuticals and medications of the modern era, pharmaceuticals, and the like. It shall encompass the discovery of medicaments, basic investigations about them, their characteristics and properties, their preparation, and their therapeutic applications.

While the committee will be monitoring relevant journals and books where such papers

might appear, they welcome nominations of papers that would be eligible for consideration. The nomination should consist of a letter citing the work along with a copy of the paper. For the current award, candidate papers will be those published in 2004 and 2005. Papers in languages other than English should be accompanied by a translation or detailed precis. Nominations should be directed to the Chair of the Committee, Suzanne White Junod, PhD, 7212 Deer Lake Lane, Rockville, MD 20855-1986, USA (e-mail: sjunod@ora.fda.gov). Nominations must be received by the Committee Chair by 15 January 2006.

The award will be presented at the 2006 annual meeting of the AAHM in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 4–7 May. As a result of a generous contribution in honour of Worth Estes from a member of the Association, the award will be accompanied by a \$500 cheque.

Jerry Stannard Memorial Award

The 2006 competition for the annual award in honour of the late Professor Jerry Stannard is open to graduate students and to recent recipients of a doctoral degree (PhD or an equivalent), conferred not more than five years before the competition deadline. The purpose of the award is to encourage research by young scholars in the pre-1700 history of materia medica, medicinal botany, pharmacy, folklore

of drug therapy, and the bibliography of these areas. In 2006 the award will be \$1000. Submissions should be received no later than 16 February 2006. For further information, please contact: The Stannard Award Committee, Attn. Professor Victor Bailey, Department of History – University of Kansas, Wescoe Hall, 1445 Jayhawk Blvd. Room 3001, Lawrence, KS 66045-7590, USA.

Bakken Fellowships and Grants

Each year, the Bakken Library and Museum in Minneapolis offers Visiting Research Fellowships and Research Travel Grants to facilitate research in its collection of books, journals, manuscripts, and instruments. The subject of the Bakken's collections is the history of electricity and magnetism with a focus on their roles in the life sciences and medicine. Significant holdings include the works of natural philosophers, scientists, physicians, electro-therapists, and electrophysiologists of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Visiting Research Fellowships up to a maximum of \$1,500 are to help defray the expenses of travel, subsistence, and other direct costs of conducting research at The Bakken. The minimum period of residence is two weeks. Preference is given to researchers who are

interested in collaborating with The Bakken on exhibits or other programmes. The deadline for applications is 20 February 2006.

Travel Grants up to a maximum of \$500 (domestic) and \$750 (foreign) are to help defray the expenses of travel, subsistence, and other direct costs of conducting research at The Bakken. The minimum period of residence is one week. Application may be made at any time during the calendar year.

For application guidelines or further information, please contact: Elizabeth Ihrig, Librarian, The Bakken Library and Museum, 3537 Zenith Avenue So., Minneapolis, MN, 55416, USA; Tel. 612-926-3878 ext. 227; Fax (612) 927-7265; e-mail Ihrig@thebakken.org; www.thebakken.org; click on "Library" or "Research".