

DRAFT

3/17/87

Notes on historiographic project for the Pew Trust.

It would appear to be very desirable to work out a program for preserving the scientific records of the extraordinary young investigators who constitute the Pew Scholarship group. At the very minimum would be the conservation of the applications and reviews that are received by the Trust for administrative and selection purposes. Beyond that we had in mind a program that might involve the fellows themselves perhaps in three stages:

- 1) alerting the scholars to the importance of maintaining some historical consciousness and providing some guidelines about the kinds of materials that are worthy of saving for future historical reference. A brief guidesheet is appended.
- 2) a questionnaire that might be distributed to scholars that could elicit some more details of background that might not necessarily be included in their routine laboratory records and correspondence. This would open the door to their own self interrogation, then
- 3) some program of oral history in which an expert interviewer would directly interrogate the scholars, being armed with the background of material provided under headings 1 and 2.

All of this goes under the general heading of "On Writing and Making Scientific History". We have to be careful to discuss this in such terms as to make it an opportunity rather than a burden on the primary scientific duties of the scholars.

The maintenance of documentary sources is the collection of the data and is a long way from the production of history. What young scholars are unlikely to realize is how evanescent are their thoughts, notes, ideas: even if they are in principle preserved they can be very difficult to interpret in authentic fashion in the context of later time. Unless there is a carefully planned and conscientious program, the most interesting material will almost certainly be lost in the course of time.

The Pew Trusts are interested in reflections about the return on its investment in the program. From a still broader perspective of science policy, there is an urgent need to understand the process of science, the better to manage it. And from a cultural perspective, biographical studies of scientists can help us understand creativity, the growth and personal development of the scientific intellect, the origins of interest in science in personal development.

Finally, we have in mind the multiple roles of the scholar as teacher (in the classroom and to the public), and as a source of expertise and judgement in socially framed policy, often of historic dimensions.

DRAFT

GUIDESHEET ON PRESERVING RECORDS FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

[This would include a preamble based on previous page;
perhaps also a guide brochure on records from the
American Institute of Physics]

Unless a scholar has actually faced the frustrations of searching for primary records of past events, he or she is unlikely to appreciate how quickly (one may feel even how systematically) they can disappear. Matters of easy and reliable recollection today will be problematical in a few years' time in a fashion that, again, is difficult for a young person to comprehend.

This guide embraces 3 kinds of memorabilia:

- 1) Records that are customarily preserved.
- 2) Records that would be made, but might be discarded made without special precautions.
- 3) Data of historical importance that would not be recorded in durable form without special attention.

It may be belaboring the obvious to make a few points, that experience tells need to be stressed. Records can be made on many different media: paper, film, increasingly electronic and electro-optical storage. Within a decade there will surely be available compact and inexpensive means of storing information on (and retrieving it from) more compact and permanent optical disks. Meanwhile, some precautions are needed to be sure that magnetic media (disks and tapes) will be preserved for the interval. Some kinds of paper will deteriorate, but less rapidly if kept from light.

Every note should be dated, including the year! They should include at least occasionally the full names of individuals remarked by initials or nicknames.

CLASS 1

The most obvious, class 1 records are

Laboratory notes and primary data

(albeit likely to be unintelligible except to author).

(Problems arise in collaborative studies).

CVs, updated bibliographies

Reprint collections are of course convenient

However, specially attention should be given to works not generally available journals.

Manuscripts

But initial drafts and initial submissions may also be worth retaining, especially with comments of reviewers.

Grant and Fellowship applications, likewise

CLASS 2

Especially, personal correspondence
 Appointment calendars, notices of seminars, press clips.
 Photographs of self, teachers, colleagues, laboratory.
 Notes on books, journal articles
 Some financial and administrative records

CLASS 3

Most notably today: notes on telephone or personal conversations.
 Failed experiments or negative results which may not be in
 publications
 Informal resumes of research ideas, dreams and ambitions
 Reactions to specific career and scientific events
 esp. points of change of direction and difficult choices.

Some fellows may wish to incorporate these kinds of items in a journal. This need but record the facts of experience, your observations, thoughts and actions. Even if you are not a Proust or a Rousseau, these factual accounts (more than of details of affect) can be indispensable in the reconstruction of history. Of course, the cardinal events of personal life cannot be disregarded. (But this writer has less faith and interest in dynamic psychobiography than in the history of ideas, taking full account of the social milieu.)

Other matters to consider are hobbies outside employment, and other engagements with outside organizations; social circles, religion, politics, health and other personal matters as they may impinge on scientific choices and outcomes.

RETROSPECTIONS:

Even now is not too soon for fellows to recapitulate the beginnings of their careers, touching on the biographical issues mentioned in the preamble. 5 year recapitulations may be the appropriate interval for reflections on research strategies, how the field is evolving, evolution of methodology, nomenclature, organizational milieu, and so forth.

Also very timely is the construction of a genealogy: the progenitors of the fellow's scientific style, technique and strategy. Some fellows have already noted their having heard reminiscences well worth having recorded: a beginning of their own active participation in capturing history.

The practice of these kinds of recording and retrospection is tantamount to self-interrogation, not too different than would be pursued in oral history. A candid, unabashed personal view is to be sought. How deeply to go in intimacy can vary according to taste.

ROLE of the PEW TRUST

The officers do of course already keep on file important records of the applications from fellows and reviewers' comments. This discussion started with some deliberation about the historical value of these documents. It is the trust's intention to establish a responsible program for the archiving of these records for future historical enquiry.

The personal records guidelineed here are viewed as each fellow's personal responsibility. It is not the Trust's intention to intrude on the privacy of any fellow; and this consideration will be paramount in any future actions of the Trust.

The Trust does wish, however, to lend every practical assistance to any fellow who may seek it, either as counselling about records worth retaining, or in providing facilities for their storage if that becomes necessary (e.g. when a fellow moves.) An academic archiving center will be used for that purpose, and professional standards of privacy and security will be maintained. Any materials deposited with the intention of making them ultimately available for historical enquiry will remain under the covenants of the depositor, as will be spelled out at the time of deposit.

Still under consideration is the possible sponsorship by the Trust of a program of Oral History, for fully voluntary participation on the part of any fellow.

GENERAL COMMENTS

There are great difficulties in writing the history of molecular bio-medicine today compared to 30 years ago. There are so many actors, there is so much filling in of detail. The major enterprise seems fairly clear cut but there are sporadic eruptions of sea mounts out of the ocean, especially with innovations of technique.

To follow will be a bibliography of
a) examples of biography/history/sociology of science
e.g.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY:

Watson

Jeremy Bernstein

History of Psychology in autobiography - G Lindzey

Annual Reviews: Prefaces; Excitement and Fascination of Science

Medawar - Memoirs of a thinking radish

BIOGRAPHY/HISTORY:

Judson: 8th Day of Creation

Pais - Albert Einstein

Benison - Tom Rivers
Goodfield - Imagined World
Kanigel
Memoirs - NAS; Royal Society
Luria - Broken Test Tube
Zuckerman - Scientific Elite

b) works about those fields.
Altick
Eiduson and Beckman on science as a career.
Merton - Sociological Ambivalence

Suggestions welcomed on above, or any part

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