
Looking forward to the past: re-focusing on the history of medicine at Cardiff University



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'...combining the best of traditional libraries with increasing support for the use of electronic resources and discovery tools—not least in those areas of special collections and archives where Cardiff and Wales have particular claims to pre-eminence.'

(Cardiff University, Information Services-Interim Strategy 2004-2009)

THE BACKGROUND

The merger of the activities of the University of Wales College of Medicine (UWCM) with those of Cardiff University on 1 August 2004 created the largest higher education institution in Wales and offers improved access to library and archive resources in the field of the history of medicine. Developing the primary archival resources within the library services of the new university is seen as an area in which the university can excel and achieve international recognition.

UWCM (now Wales College of Medicine, Biology and Life and Health Sciences at Cardiff University) resources relating to the history of medicine include the College's institutional archives chronicling the development of teaching and research in the field since 1931, the archives of Archie Cochrane and David Bainton, and the historical book collection consisting of over 2000 volumes. Cardiff University has an extensive special collection and archival resource including Welsh manuscripts and the Salisbury collection, which

includes several early medical works, its own institutional archives and the library's academic archives containing a number of medical related sources.

Within the former UWCM the decision was taken to concentrate on the acquiring and promoting of historical material in subjects and specialties reflecting areas of particular significance in Cardiff and Wales. Two identified areas are the history of genetics in medicine and the history of evaluative approaches to health care.

HISTORY OF GENETICS IN MEDICINE

An initiative is under way to develop a Genetics in Medicine Historical Library consisting of an extensive collection of key books in the evolution of this relatively recently established medical discipline. The initiative is led by Sir Peter Harper, emeritus professor of medical genetics and Professor David Cooper, professor of human molecular genetics, Wales College of Medicine, Biology, Life and Health Sciences of Cardiff University, with assistance from staff of the library's history of medicine support unit.

CHEHC

Led by the new University Library Service (ULS), a Centre for the History of Evaluation in Health Care (CHEHC) is being developed. The intention is to acquire and make accessible the world's principal collection of primary resources for scholars, researchers and others interested in the history of the evaluative approach to health care, one of the most influential international developments in this field in the last 60 years.

Capital funding from HEFCW has been secured to convert existing offices at the Heath Park campus into accommodation suitable to house the CHEHC. An archives and special collections centre, it will be equipped with state of the art archival storage, preservation and study facilities. In addition it will enable small group teaching. The conversion will be completed in 2005.

WHY CARDIFF?

It is particularly fitting that Cardiff should seek recognition for developing world class scholarly resources for the history of the evaluative approaches to health care. Archie Cochrane, a seminal influence in the evolution of evaluation in health care, had connections with the city going back to 1948 with his appointment to the Medical Research Council Unit at Llandough, and later as professor of tuberculosis and chest diseases at the then Welsh National School of Medicine in

1960. It was Iain Chalmers who developed Archie Cochrane's ideas while a MRC Research Fellow at Cardiff in the 1970s, and with others went on to establish the Cochrane Collaboration in 1993.

WHAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR?

THE COCHRANE ARCHIVE

The Cochrane Archive is housed currently in the university's Archie Cochrane Library at Llandough Hospital. The photographs, personal items and professional papers provide a rich resource for research on Archie Cochrane's life and career. The archive catalogue contains over 180 entries and has evolved from files originally deposited at the Pneumoconiosis and Epidemiology Research Units in Cardiff.

Launched in December 2002, the Archie Cochrane website marks the new university's public commitment to developing a centre for the study of the history of evaluation in health care. The website is becoming more widely known and is generating an increasing number of requests and enquiries. Based on the print archive, it includes a summary of the archive catalogue and hyperlinks to the full catalogue listing, photographs, professional papers and personal memorabilia, a list of his publications, pages devoted to his POW experiences and to his pioneering population studies in the Rhondda valleys, studies which helped to establish epidemiology as a quantitative science. View the website at <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/schoolsanddivisions/divisions/insrv/libraryservices/research/cochrane/index.html>

THE DAVID BAINTON ARCHIVE

In 2003, the professional papers of the late Dr David Bainton (1941-2002), senior lecturer at the Centre for Applied Public Health Medicine, UWCM, were acquired. The papers have been listed and when fully catalogued, together with associated material, will be launched as a website.

SIR AUSTIN BRADFORD HILL (1897–1991)

Through the generosity of Professor Tony Johnson of Cambridge University, the CHEHC has acquired a rich archive of papers and audiotapes relating to the work of this distinguished medical statistician and epidemiologist. Plans are in hand to make this material more widely known.

OTHER COLLECTIONS

Preliminary negotiations are proceeding with a view to securing other important collections of archival material in the field including:

- the papers of Sir Iain Chalmers
- the archives of the Cochrane Collaboration

- further material relating to the life and work of Archie Cochrane
- the professional papers of Professor Peter Elwood, a former colleague of Archie Cochrane, who succeeded him as Director of the MRC Epidemiology Research Unit.

Other relevant organisations and key individuals have already been identified, and will be invited to contribute to the creation of a unique concentration of archival material related to the history of evaluation in health care.

THE FUTURE

Developing CHEHC and other primary archival resources is seen as a key initiative by the new university, and as an area of expertise in which the new university can excel and become a world leader.

The founding of the CHEHC marks one of the first multidisciplinary research centres within the new university. Developing the paper archives and ensuring their presence on the web confirms the commitment of the new university to facilitating remote access to its resources by scholars and students. Cardiff University's experience in digitising scholarly resources will also contribute to CHEHC.

Hitherto, Cardiff's key role in the origin and history of evaluation in health care has not been promoted nationally or internationally. The late 1990s saw the beginnings of a committed effort to rectify this and to celebrate the links between Cochrane, evaluation in health care and Cardiff. CHEHC's mission is to build on this initiative and to create the first centre in the world with a specific focus on the history of evaluation in health care.

SUPPORT FOR CHEHC

CHEHC is an exciting initiative, enthusiastically supported by Professor Stephen Tomlinson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the merged Cardiff University and Provost of the Wales College of Medicine, Biology, Life and Health Sciences. Professor Jonathan Osmond, Head of Cardiff University School of History and Archaeology is a keen supporter of the proposed Centre. Collaboration between the former UWCM and Cardiff is expressed in the membership of the Archives and Museums Steering Group and in the wider all Wales History of Medicine Forum, further strengthened by the merger.

A relevant associated development has been the appointment of a Wellcome Lecturer in the His-

tory of Medicine at Cardiff University. The continuing support, advice and assistance of Sir Iain Chalmers, and of colleagues in the UK Cochrane Centre and the international Cochrane Collaboration is gratefully acknowledged.

If you have any material you may wish to donate to the CHEHC, to the Cochrane Archive or to the Cardiff University institutional archive, please contact us at the address given below.

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