TABLE OF CONTENTS
Editor's Message........................................................................................................3
From the President......................................................................................................4
LAMPHHS News.........................................................................................................5
Member Profiles..........................................................................................................8-9
Repository Profile: Historical Collections, University of Maryland-Baltimore.........9
Research Report: Regulating User Access to Heritage Audio-Visual Collections....15
News of the History of Medicine Division, National Library of Medicine...............18
Repository News........................................................................................................19
Announcements.........................................................................................................30
Book Reviews...........................................................................................................34
Advertisers................................................................................................................34

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Submissions for the Watermark:
The Watermark encourages submissions of news and stories about events, collections, catalogues, people, awards, grants, publications, and anything else of professional interest to the members of LAMPHHS. Please submit your contributions in a timely way to Stephen Novak, as e-mail attachments. Visuals should be submitted as jpegs with a resolution of at least 300 dpi if possible. Copyright clearance for content and visuals are the responsibility of the author.

EDITOR’S MESSAGE

Summer must have left LAMPHHS members relaxed and energized because we’ve rarely had the number of article submissions we’ve had for this issue. Thanks to all of you who contributed!

The Fall issue includes a profile of historical collections at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, one of the oldest medical schools in the U.S.; a report on creating access guidelines to heritage audio-visual collections; news and announcements from members across the country; and three book reviews. More than enough to occupy yourself while drinking your pumpkin spice beverage of choice.

I especially want to draw your attention to the article on the new LAMPHHS website. The website committee has worked countless hours to create what I think is one of the most handsome professional association websites I’ve seen. Kudos to the members for this achievement!

The passing of the old website leads me to acknowledge the superlative work of our now former webmaster, Russell Johnson of UCLA, in tending to, updating, and protecting the previous website. Like all LAMPHHS officers, Russell received only our gratitude for the many hours he spent on the association’s business. It’s members like him who keep LAMPHHS the vital organization it is.

I hope you enjoy the issue. Good reading!

Stephen Novak
Editor, The Watermark
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our organization has a major milestone to celebrate this month—the release of the redesigned website with a unique URL - lamphhs.org. Please check it out and bookmark! I would like to congratulate and express my deepest gratitude to the members of the Website Task Force who have been hard at work for the past three years on the site's improvements and in collaboration with a vendor developed a new web space that addresses our growing needs: Sarah Alger, who served as a co-chair for the duration of this project, co-chairs - Meghan Kennedy and Beth DeFrancis Sun, and committee members: Dominic Hall, Russell Johnson, Lucy Ross, and Pat Gallagher (posthumously).

Let's give a round of applause to Russell Johnson who has been leading the support of the organizational website for the past twenty years. Russell first volunteered as the ALHHS Website Administrator and then maintained the LAMPHHS website. This was a herculean task—he was constantly updating the site content, migrating to new platforms in collaboration with his institutional IT, and was always responsive to the membership demands. I would like to thank Russell for his continuous service to all of us!

Do you have new colleagues at your institution or in your state who may benefit from joining LAMPHHS? Please invite them to become a member, we are looking forward to welcoming them.

Wishing everyone a joyful holiday season!

Polina Ilieva
President

BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS
LAMPHHS NEWS

The New LAMPHHS.org is Live!

The Website Task Force is thrilled to announce the official launch of the new LAMPHHS website. The new site houses legacy information that was previously accessible through the ALHHS UCLA-hosted site, along with an updated feel and navigation. In addition to the new layout, the Task Force continues to work with the developers to implement members-only access which will help us better manage our member database, renewals, and registration for annual meetings. We will be providing updates to LAMPHHS members through *The Watermark* and listserv as these features are completed. There are still a few tweaks to be made, and you may notice some errors here and there while we complete the migration, but for now you are welcome to head over to [www.lamphhs.org](http://www.lamphhs.org) and explore!

The Website Task Force would like to thank the Executive Committee for their continued support and patience throughout this process, and an even bigger thanks to Russell Johnson at UCLA for his work on maintaining the site for so many years, and his invaluable assistance with the migration.

**Sarah Alger & Meghan Kennedy**
Co-Chairs, Website Task Force

And Now a Word From our Former Webmaster

With the birth of the new LAMPHHS website, your editor asked our long-standing and now former webmaster, Russell Johnson of UCLA, how he ended up in this position of great power and great responsibility. His response is below:

I inherited the mantle of ALHHS website administrator in 2008 when Kathy Donahue retired at UCLA. Kathy chaired the Website Committee and launched the site in 2000 (but the Wayback Machine did not capture any images until 2001). Under Kathy, staff at History & Special Collections at UCLA's Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library contributed to editing the site, which was hosted on a UCLA
Library server through the generosity of Biomed Librarian Alison Bunting. Kathy and I tried coding the website first in raw HTML, having learned in David Seaman's "Introduction to Electronic Texts and Images" class at Rare Book School/Virginia. We then moved to the Cold Fusion interface with our designer, library assistant Richard Davidon. When that interface disappeared, it was back to raw HTML coding ever since. As UCLA Library started decommissioning Cold Fusion projects, the writing was on the virtual wall for our website. Instead of selecting a new commercial host and implementing a move, I announced in 2017 it was time for ALHHS to recruit and empower the next generation of website management. The torch—represented by a swell new logo that represents the LAMPHHS acronym—is passed!

Russell Johnson
Former Webmaster

The Ad Hoc Hazardous Materials Committee: Want to Have a Blast?

Are you looking for a little excitement in your life? Do you want to impress others with stories about the dangerous worlds of archives, libraries, and museums? Then I have the committee for you! Please join the newly formed Ad Hoc Committee on Hazardous Materials. The Committee is charged with compiling and providing resources and guidelines for working with hazardous materials in archives, libraries, and museums. See the official charge below:

The Ad Hoc Hazardous Materials Committee provides resources and guidelines for working with hazardous materials in archives, libraries, and museums.

General Description:

By the 2023 annual meeting (May 10, 2023), this ad hoc committee will have compiled and made available via the LAMPHHS website best practices for handling hazardous materials in archives, libraries, and museums.

This committee will consist of six members, plus the Vice President/President-Elect, all serving a one-year term. One of the six members will also be a member of the Society of American Archivists’ Science, Technology, and Health Care Section.

Responsibilities

1. Identifies and compiles existing resources.

2. Creates guidelines or manuals.
3. Collaborates with the LAMPHHS webmaster in creating, maintaining, and updating a webpage of resources.

4. Additional duties as needed.

Yours in danger,

Brooke Fox
Chair, Ad Hoc Committee Hazardous Materials Committee

Annual Meeting Travel Scholarship Applications

The Travel Scholarships Committee is now accepting applications from members seeking funds to support their attendance at the 2023 Annual Meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on May 10-11, 2023.

LAMPHHS awards up to four annual conference travel stipends to members of the organization who are staff, volunteers, students, or early career professionals working for health science history museums, libraries, or archives. Early career professionals are those who have worked in the history of the health sciences field fewer than five years, although they may have been employed in the profession longer. The purpose of these awards is to encourage and support continued education and professional engagement for members working in the field.

Applicants should submit the application form; a personal statement (no more than 500 words) highlighting their interest in the conference, how attendance will benefit them, and why they need financial support; and a letter of recommendation from either their academic advisor (for students) or immediate supervisor (for staff/volunteers) to the Chair of the committee by March 15, 2023.

For further information, please contact the committee Chair, Brandon Pieczko (bpieczko@iu.edu)

Travel Scholarships Committee:
Stephen Greenberg & Brandon Pieczko
MEMBER PROFILES

Name: Alan James Hawk

Member of LAMPHHS since: 1986 [Medical Museum Association]

Hometown: Wilmington, Delaware

Current Employer and Position: National Museum of Health and Medicine, Defense Health Agency, 2460 Linden Lane, Silver Spring, MD, Museum Specialist in charge of Historical Collections.

Education: BA, History, University of Delaware

Professional interests: Military medicine, orthopedic surgery, and infectious diseases

Other facts, interests, or hobbies: Married with two adult children. My wife, Cindy, is a retired Physician Assistant. My daughter, Laura, is the Director of the New Spire Arts in Frederick, MD, and my son, Matthew, teleworks as a contractor supporting the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services supporting the National Plan & Provider Enumeration System and also developing his career as a film editor.

I write a regular column ‘ArtiFacts’ in the journal Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research.

Served as radios communications and infantry in 115th Infantry with the Maryland National Guard (12 years) and Intelligence Specialist with the U.S. Navy Reserve (18 years) retiring as a Senior Chief Petty Officer in 2017. Served one year tour in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 2009.

Active member of the Civil Air Patrol, auxiliary of the United States Air Force.

32° Scottish Rite Mason.

I have been vaccinated with all three of the approved variants of the COVID vaccine.
Name: Krista Stracka

Member of LAMPHHS since: 2021

Hometown: I’m originally from San Clemente, CA. After moving around a bit, I now live in Silver Spring, MD.

Current Employer and Position: Rare Book Cataloger, History of Medicine Division, National Library of Medicine

Education: BA in English (minor in History) from Millersville University; MLIS (focus in Archival Studies) from San José State University

Professional interests: Cataloging, digitization, curation, history of the book and printing, public outreach, medical and scientific illustration, fragmentology, historical recipes

Other facts, interests, or hobbies: I enjoy traveling with my husband, reading, gardening, and playing with our two dogs (Norman and Lily). Over the last couple of years, I’ve played around with different hobbies from cross stitch to baking. Inspired partly by NLM’s collection of print and manuscript recipe books, I’ve recently discovered the fun of creating natural inks and other botanical art projects.

REPOSITORY PROFILE: HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE

Historical Collections of the Health Sciences and Human Services Library (HSHSL) is an archival repository for the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB). The physical and digital collections document the history and accomplishments of the graduate, dental, medical, nursing, pharmacy, and social work schools at UMB and the fields they represent. The repository holds unique manuscript collections and selected primary source documents dating to the University’s early nineteenth century origins. Historical Collections also houses the HSHSL’s rare book collections, featuring significant works in the health sciences and social fields.

BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS
The Dr. Theodore Woodward Reading Room in Historical Collections, 5th floor, Health Sciences and Human Services Library, University of Maryland, Baltimore

Brief History

UMB was founded by Maryland legislature as the College of Medicine of Maryland in 1807 (the act is seen at left); it was reconstituted in 1812 as the University of Maryland. UMB is the result of several mergers with other local universities and colleges. The seven UMB schools were founded as follows: School of Medicine 1807, School of Law 1813, School of Dentistry 1840, School of Pharmacy 1841, School of Nursing 1889, Graduate School 1918, and School of Social Work 1961.

The HSHSL traces its founding to the 1813 purchase of Dr. John Crawford’s, lecturer on Natural History at UMB,
extensive book collection. Dr. Crawford’s collection is now housed in the Dr. Theodore E. Woodward reading room in Historical Collections. It contains 569 volumes dating from the 15th century onwards with a focus on natural history.

Unfortunately, it is unclear exactly when the Historical Collections department of the library was established, though records indicate that archival and rare book collections were part of the original library building, held in locked “Treasure Rooms.” When a new library building was opened in 1961, two large rooms were set aside for Historical Collections. At the time of the current HSHSL building’s opening in 1998, a special ceremony featured the oldest book, *De Medicina*, being walked by hand from the 1961 building to its new home. Today Historical Collections is housed on the fifth floor of the HSHSL building at 601 W. Lombard Street in Baltimore. Its reading room mirrors the shape of an anatomical theater to honor UMB’s rich medical history.

**Collection Highlights**

Historical Collections oldest volume is Aurelius Cornelius Celsus’ *De Medicina* published in 1497. For archival repositories, provenance is always important, however, in this case the provenance is particularly unique. *De Medicina* came to Historical Collections with a larger Anatomy Collection compiled by Dr. Eduard Uhlenhuth, Professor of Gross Anatomy from 1925 to 1955. In 1937, Dr. Uhlenhuth encountered *De Medicina* for sale for $55, an amount he could not afford. So the School of Medicine faculty came together to contribute money to purchase it for the Anatomy Collection. To recognize their generosity, Dr. Uhlenhuth hand-painted a memorial page with each man’s signature page tipped into the oldest volume, *Celsus’ De Medicina, 1497 by Dr. Eduard Uhlenhuth* to acknowledge the contributions of his medical colleagues.
signature and had it tipped into the back of the volume, a beautiful tribute and story.

One of the first documented collections held by the historical collections, is a collection of 189 bound volumes of handwritten medical theses dating from 1817 to 1887. Early in the School of Medicine’s history, a final dissertation was a requirement for graduation. Students were permitted to choose their own topic; therefore, this collection depicts early nineteenth century medical education and research trends. Some theses are written in Latin, for which students received special awards at graduation, while others include beautifully drawn title pages or figures depicting medical apparatus or treatments and anatomical drawings.

Above: Title page of an 1865 Thesis by William Warrington Evans, showcases the artistic skills of the author and is indicative of the types of education received by medical students during the Civil War. http://hdl.handle.net/10713/1778

Above: Images of the September 7, 1900 letter from Dr. Walter Reed to Dr. James Carroll, Class of 1891, celebrating the news of Carroll's recovery from Yellow Fever and asking "Did the mosquito" cause the illness? http://hdl.handle.net/10713/8236

Historical Collections houses the James Carroll Yellow Fever Commission Letters manuscript collection. Dr. James Carroll graduated from the University of Maryland School of Medicine in 1891 while also serving in the United States Army. After
graduation, Dr. Carroll continued his Army service and was assigned to the Army Medical Museum under the curatorship of Dr. Walter Reed. In 1899, Dr. Reed placed Dr. Carroll second in command to the United States Army Yellow Fever Commission in Cuba. This commission aimed to uncover the cause of Yellow Fever outbreaks in the region. During the studies, Dr. Carroll and other human subjects became infected with Yellow Fever after subjecting themselves to mosquito bites. As a result of the infections the researchers determined the cause of Yellow Fever was diseased mosquitoes. The collection includes correspondence between Dr. Carroll and Dr. Reed as well as letters between Carroll and his wife, Jennie.

Historical Collections houses, what is perhaps the largest Saint Apollonia Artworks Collection in the world. Saint Apollonia is the patron saint of dentists and relief from toothache.

Legend has it Apollonia was persecuted and tortured by having her teeth knocked out by a crowd of pagans for failing to denounce her Christian god. She is often depicted holding dental forceps and an extracted tooth. The Saint Apollonia Collection contains 82 works of art. The provenance of the collection is a bit uncertain, though records indicate artwork was both donated and purchased by the library beginning in the 1940s.

At left: Oil painting of Saint Apollonia, date and artist unknown. Believed to be circa 15th century.
http://hdl.handle.net/10713/109
For the pharmacy researcher, the School of Pharmacy Historical Book Collection contains influential pharmacy and medical texts, as well as dispensatories, pharmacopoeias, botanicals, and herbals from around the world.

The volumes date from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. The pharmacopoeia collection contains volumes published from around the world. The botanicals and herbals in the pharmacy collection are truly the beauties among the historical collections and have inspired two HSHSL calendars.

At left: Iris Germanica from Curtis's Botanical Magazine, Vol 18, Plate 670, 1803. Part of the Pharmacy Historical Book Collection.

Many of the volumes and collections held in Historical Collections have been digitized and are freely available in the UMB Digital Archive. This includes UMB and related school's Yearbooks dating from 1897, UMB and related school's academic catalogs dating from 1838, a collection of dental illustrations, the Civil War letters of Dr. Eugene F. Cordell (the first librarian at UMB), a collection of medical lecture and class notes, and rare volumes from the book collections.

Historical Collections is an important asset to the HSHSL and UMB. The items support library exhibits and publications, campus publications and events, as well as community and academic researchers. The Collections are open to the public. For access or questions contact Tara Wink, Historical Collections Librarian and Archivist.

Tara Wink
Historical Collections Librarian and Archivist
Historical Collections, Health Sciences and Human Services Library
University of Maryland, Baltimore
RESEARCH REPORT: A FRAMEWORK FOR REGULATING USER ACCESS TO HERITAGE AUDIO-VISUAL COLLECTIONS AT GALTER HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY

Galter Health Sciences Library received a Recordings at Risk Grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) in Spring 2021 to support its project “Medical Education on Film: Preserving the Medical Motion Pictures (1929-1959) of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.” Since then, Galter Special Collections along with Galter Library staff and external partners, have worked to digitize, describe, preserve the collection, and make it discoverable and accessible to patrons.

The educational films, contemporaneously known as medical motion pictures, depict surgeries, procedures, medical conditions, and research spanning 1928 to 1963 in ten health sciences fields, including anatomy, pathology, obstetrics, otolaryngology, and surgery. A team of Galter staff watched each film in order to create Encoded Archival Description finding aids with item-level descriptions. Accordingly, these finding aids are now discoverable in Northwestern library catalogs, the Northwestern finding aids portal, Explore Chicago Collections, and ArchiveGrid, and twenty-five films are currently available online in the Medical Heritage Library collection. Due to sensitive content, however, some films are only accessible onsite at Galter, and some are entirely restricted from patrons.

While we anticipated assigning access and use restrictions due to the medical nature of the content, the extent and conditions of restriction had to be defined. Roughly half of the collection would remain hidden if we were to assign unrestricted versus restricted access levels, which would be against the spirit of the CLIR grant. At the same time, we did not want to violate privacy laws, nor exploit or inflict further harm by thoughtlessly providing...
unrestricted access to films displaying subjects whose consent status was unknown. In searching for a solution, we consulted with Northwestern’s Office of General Counsel, the Center for Bioethics and Medical Humanities, as well as staff at libraries with similar collection issues. Of particular help were the 2015 paper by Emily Novak Gustainis and Phoebe Evans Letocha entitled “The Practice of Privacy,” Principles of Bioethics (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013), and Ethics and Librarianship (Hauptman 2002).

After discussions between Katie Lattal (Head, Special Collections) and Mohammad Hosseini (Postdoctoral Researcher in Ethics), the “Access Review Board” was established. Led by Katie, this group (Mohammad Hosseini, Gretchen Neidhardt, Mahonyre Estrada, and David Heckler) flagged potential ethical and privacy issues in the collection (e.g., a patient smiling at the camera to display a well-healed surgical scar, children having teeth pulled with a tooth key, patients speaking to camera before treatment, animal vivisections, episiotomies, treatment of unconscious patients with no sign of consent). Consequently, based on the nature of collected issues and in anticipation of potential issues in future collections, the Access Review Board defined four specific criteria to rate content.

The first two criteria are about what is seen or heard:

1) **Disturbing visuals.** Content involves
   a. Visible or audible expressions of pain
   b. Loss of limb(s) or life
   c. Cruelty against animals
   d. Footage of incidents that led to injuries

2) **Denigrating or discriminatory language.** Content involves the use of
   a. Disrespectful or humiliating terms against individuals or groups, including but not limited to sexist, racist or homophobic terms
   b. Outdated and insensitive use of terms related to mental or physical conditions (e.g., crippled)

*Isaac Abt, MD percussing posterior chest of a patient while nurse attends the child, in Pneumonia: A Pediatric Clinic, 1938.*
The third and fourth criteria are about how the content was created:

3) **Privacy.** Content shows
   a. People’s faces or other biometric identifiers
   b. Subjects’ personal information, e.g., name, address

4) **Recruitment and participation of subjects.** Content involves the participation of
   a. Persons who did not have the capacity for consent at the time of recording, e.g., children, patients with mental disability or dementia
   b. Subjects who could not have consented at the time of recording, e.g., those who were unconscious or under the influence of psychoactive substances upon admission
   c. Prisoners, subjects under duress or those expressing a desire not to be part of the experiment/operation or recording

Based on the rating of the content, the following three access levels were defined (see chart).

**Level 1 – Open for research**
Content does not meet any of the above criteria.

**Level 2 – Accessible onsite**
Content meets Criteria 1 or 2.
Patrons can view the item onsite at Galter Library under the supervision of Special Collections staff.

**Level 3 – Restricted: apply for access**
Content meets Criteria 3 or 4.
An application must be submitted to the Access Review Board.

Patrons who wish to access content ranked as Level 3 should fill out an application form and explain their rationale for access. The Access Review Board will review applications and decide whether access should be granted. If granted, the content will be accessible to access onsite at Galter Library under the supervision of Special Collections staff.

In addition to this article, Katie and Mohammad led an education session about the framework and its implementation during the SLA Midwest virtual symposium in June 2022, and plan to remain engaged with the library and archives communities in this
domain and welcome feedback and suggestions. Understandably, this work will continue to evolve to meet the needs of our current and future collections. We hope that by involving the archives community, this framework becomes a resource for others who might be struggling with similar issues.

**Katie Lattal, MA**
Head, Special Collections
Galter Health Sciences Library
Northwestern University
Feinberg School of Medicine

**Mohammad Hosseini, MA, PhD**
Postdoctoral Scholar
Department of Preventive Medicine
Northwestern University
Feinberg School of Medicine

**References**


**NEWS FROM THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE DIVISION, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE**

The National Library of Medicine launches a newly designed online exhibition, *Dream Anatomy*
The new online exhibition reimagines the popular physical installation presented in the NLM Rotunda Gallery 20 years ago, which displayed some of NLM’s rare anatomical books and prints to the general public for the first time in 2002. The exhibition was curated by Michael Sappol, PhD, a former staff historian in NLM’s History of Medicine Division.

*Dream Anatomy* explores how “who we are beneath our skin” has amazed, entertained, scared, fascinated, and inspired us, and how art and the artistic imagination have always been an essential part of the science of anatomy. Delving into both fanciful elements and realism in anatomical illustrations and three-dimensional works, the exhibition features imaginative anatomical books from early modern medicine, along with the work of 20th- and 21st-century artists. These images in woodcuts, copper engravings, lithographs, photographs, and digital imaging show anatomical artists’ paying homage to the body hidden under the skin from Vesalius’s groundbreaking illustrations in *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543) to a six-foot Plexiglas book (2000) representing the digitized anatomies captured in the NLM’s Visible Human project.

Highlighting the Library’s work in increasing digital access to its collections, the online exhibition includes a Digital Gallery with 31 fully-digitized collection items that were part of the physical display in 2002.

**REPOSITORY NEWS**

**New Online Exhibit at Oskar Diethelm Library, Weill Cornell Medical College**

The Oskar Diethelm Library, part of the DeWitt Wallace Institute of Psychiatry: History, Policy, & the Arts at Weill Cornell Medical College, is pleased to announce the release of a new online Omeka exhibit on nostalgia: [https://oskardiethelm.omeka.net/exhibits/show/nostalgia/nostalgia-as-clinical-homesick](https://oskardiethelm.omeka.net/exhibits/show/nostalgia/nostalgia-as-clinical-homesick).

This exhibit was made possible through the wonderful curation and assistance of Jenny Cheng, who is completing a MA in the Archives and Public History program at New York University. The exhibit documents the rise and fall of nostalgia as a medical diagnosis. The term was coined in Johannes Hofer’s 1688 medical dissertation *Dissertatio Medica de Nostalgia* to elucidate mental anguish resulting from a severe form of homesickness. Called heimweh by the Germans and maladie du pays by the French, Hofer wrote: “Since it has no medical name, I have called it nostalgia, of Greek origin, from Nostos, return to one’s native land, and Algos, pain or distress.” Hofer described the abnormality
as stemming from the brain and imagination living in the past while the body wastes away.

The exhibit utilizes many resources from the Diethelm Library, including these Swiss tunes from 1710. In this publication, Theodor Zwinger tied homesickness to patriotic sentiments that were more attuned to imperialism in the eighteenth century and conceived the word Pothopatridalgia: Algia meaning ache, Pathos is a longing, and Patria is one’s native land. Some believed that the fatal affliction was triggered by one’s sense of hearing, by auditory reminders of the homeland. It was reported that Swiss mercenaries in France and Belgium became so homesick that they deserted, fell deathly ill, or committed suicide upon hearing a type of Swiss melody known as Ranz des Vaches. These were regional songs used to call cows from mountain pastures. Zwinger wrote that hearing these tunes had such a harmful effect on Swiss soldiers that singing, playing, or whistling the songs was prohibited by law.

More information on the history of nostalgia as a medical diagnosis is available in the online exhibit, and other resources at the Diethelm Library can be found on the website: https://psychiatry.weill.cornell.edu/research-institutes/dewitt-wallace-institute-psychiatry/oskar-diethelm-library.

Nicole Topich
Special Collections Librarian, Oskar Diethelm Library
DeWitt Wallace Institute of Psychiatry: History, Policy, & the Arts
Weill Cornell Medical College
Good Vibrations! An Exhibit at the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

“We give a written guarantee that our appliance will cure the diseases mentioned…”

“Indoresed [sic] by the government!”

“Every man and woman troubled with weak and languid feelings, nervous, rheumatic, or organic disorders should wear the… electropathic belt”

“Diseases that are now treated successfully by vibration… (colic, gallstones, impotency, insomnia, paralysis, spinal curvature)” See Image for full list.

“Vibration and Electricity are the most natural remedies known.”

The statements above were just a sample of the testimonials and claims found in advertisements, sales brochures, and user manuals for electrotherapy devices from Good Vibrations, a physical and online exhibit, recently on display at the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University.

Electrotherapy, or the “use of electric currents passed through the body to stimulate nerves and muscles” gained notoriety from the mid-1800s into the 1920s. Consumers
and patients were eager to explore the endless possibilities of electricity to cure their medical ailments and improve their vitality. Eager to reach new customers and with little-to-no government oversight, producers of medical batteries, electric suspension belts, and electric rejuvenators claimed that their devices could cure nearly all diseases—many with a money-back guarantee if it didn’t work!

Today, electricity and battery power are necessary tools in modern medicine. From powering medical devices and hospital equipment to its uses in electro-stimulation therapy and electroshock therapy, electricity is everywhere. Though widely regarded as a modern innovation, the use of electricity in medicine dates back to ancient Rome, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece. Centuries ago, these civilizations attempted to harness electricity from eels and catfish to cure ailments such as gout and baldness. We all remember the story of Benjamin Franklin flying a kite. This may, in fact, have been an experiment with medical purposes. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* has its protagonist experiment with electricity to bring life back from the dead.

The invention of the battery in the early nineteenth century revolutionized the capabilities of electricity, and its uses for medical purposes were widely studied. From the 1850s to the early twentieth century, once-unimaginable discoveries in battery power and electricity transformed the world. Many people began to believe they could harness this new power for medical, health, and beauty purposes.

Cities around the world became home to university departments, medical societies, and practices devoted to electrotherapy. At the same time, mass consumerism and mass production allowed average citizens to purchase cheap electrotherapy devices from sales catalogs, local electricians, and medical supply companies and salesmen.
Portrayed as an alternative to pills and medicine, electrotherapy devices (through low current shock waves or vibrations applied to different areas of the body) claimed to treat a wide range of conditions, such as arthritis, sciatica, gout, impotency, glaucoma, and “nervousness.”

Although such devices were often dismissed as quackery by many in the medical profession, their low cost and widespread marketing attracted a large audience eager to consume all things electric.

The items on display in Good Vibrations explore the history of electrotherapy from the mid-19th century into the Roaring 1920s. Several of the items on display, including the Davis-Patent Electric Machine for Nervous Diseases, the Overbeck Electric Rejuvenator, and the Violet Ray Machine, serve as early examples of electrotherapeutic devices. All items on display come from the History of Medicine Collections and the Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Good Vibrations was on display in The Josiah Charles Trent History of Medicine Room from April 26, 2022, until October 15, 2022. Click here to view the online exhibit.

Image Address: https://blogs.library.duke.edu/rubenstein/files/2022/04/Overbeck-Rejuvenator--768x640.png

This following blog post originally appeared in The Devil’s Tale, a publication by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University.

Roger Peña
Research Services Librarian
David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University
Celebrating the Library!

On a lovely September evening, a lively group of supporters gathered at the Academy Building on 5th Avenue to celebrate the Library, have fun, and raise funds. At left, Director Paul Theerman welcomed the crowd, and at right, Historical Collections Librarian Arlene Shaner showed Albinus’s oversize anatomical atlas to enthusiastic guests. Conservator Jayne Hillam demonstrated her work, and Cataloger Miranda Schwartz displayed the wide range of our acquisitions. The September 21 event was the Library’s first large-scale in-person gathering since early 2020 and marked a turning-point in emerging from the pandemic. Check out photos of the event here.

The Academy Library Timeline

In August, the Library mounted our online timeline of major milestones in our history, from our founding in 1847 to our most recent event series, Then & Now. Explore the Library’s growth, including such notable acquisitions as the Edward Clark Streeter and Fenwick Beekman collections; our different homes leading up to our current building on 5th Avenue; notable librarians such as Archibald Malloch and Janet Doe; and digitization successes such as the Fasciculus Medicinae. In September, a Spanish-language version joined the English one. Both can be found here.
Virtual Visit: The Academy Library  Virtual visits are short video introductions to the Library’s collections. In October the virtual visit is about the Academy Library itself, working from our new timeline. Previous Virtual Visits can be found here.

Fall Library Events: Then & Now

On Tuesday, October 18, the Library will present “The Past and Future of Medical Libraries,” the next in its 175th-anniversary series Then & Now, using history to help understand current concerns. Presented with NYAM’s Fellows Section on the History of Medicine and Public Health, Robert J. Ruben, MD, Chair, the event will feature the Library’s Historical Collections Librarian Arlene Shaner, historian of medicine Bert Hansen, and Melissa Grafe, head of the Medical Historical Library at Yale School of Medicine, in a wide-ranging discussion moderated by Library Director Paul Theerman.

On Tuesday, November 15, the Library will mount its final Then & Now 2022 offering, an event on healthy aging through time. The event features Kavita Sivaramakrishnan, Columbia University, and David Troyansky, Brooklyn College and CUNY Graduate Center. They will present their insights on a series of videos of the experiences of older New Yorkers prepared by Mario Rubano, NYAM Center for Healthy Aging, who will moderate the discussion. Please check our events page for registration information.

Both these Then & Now events are Zoom-only! To see past events—including May’s Then & Now event on drug policy and harm reduction services—go to the Library’s events and programs page.

From the Library Blog, Books, Health, and History  In Library Loans, Arlene Shaner looks at one of our most spectacular items, the letter William Burke wrote on the eve of his 1829 Edinburgh execution for murder, as part of the celebrated Burke and Hare case. We lent the letter (as installed, above) for “Anatomy: A Matter of Death and Life” at the National

**Color Our Collections**

It’s not too early to start preparing for Color Our Collections 2023, taking place February 6 through 10. In the meanwhile, enjoy architect Henry Whitfield’s pen-and-ink drawing of the 1926 NYAM building as seen from Central Park—the Library was the whole third floor with the double-high arched windows as well as extending to the back, plus 9 floors of stacks (not featured). This image is from our 2022 coloring book, celebrating NYAM’s 175 years of service.

**National Hispanic Heritage Month**

National Hispanic Heritage Month runs from September 15 through October 15. The Library identified and worked up short biographical profiles of four NYAM Fellows of Hispanic heritage: Jordi Casals-Ariet (1911–2004), Maximilian Arthur Ramirez (d. 1946), Alexander Garcia (1919–2012), and Elana Rios (b. 1955), for use in social media.
Library Research Fellowships

In October the Library awarded its 2023 fellowships: the Audrey and William H. Helfand Fellowship in the History of Medicine and Public Health to Sean Purcell, Indiana University, for his project “Imaging Consumption: Seeing ‘The White Plague’ in American Medicine”; and the Paul Klemperer Fellowship in the History of Medicine to Anastasiia Zaplatina, Bielefeld University, for her project “The American Soviet Medical Society (1943–1947): Academic Exchanges between Allies and Their Cold War Legacy.” Each fellowship provides $5,000 for a month’s residence at the Library during 2023. Congratulations both!

At Home with the NYAM Library

Our monthly e-newsletter highlights our collections, digital and otherwise; Virtual Visits; and our blog, Books, Health, and History. Sign up for the e-newsletter here and peruse earlier issues on At Home with the NYAM Library.

“Treat Local: The Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland, 1884-2020” – Exhibit at Oregon Health & Sciences University

Oregon Health Sciences University’s Historical Collections & Archives is pleased to introduce our new exhibit Treat Local: The Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland, 1884 – 2020 curated by Archives Assistants River Freemont and Jordan Jedry. The exhibit is now on view online and in person through December 2022.

From 1884 to 2020, the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland (MSMP) represented a community of physicians who strove to create “the best environment in which to care for patients.” Remembered fondly by former members for the spirit of collegiality fostered during the Society’s countless meetings and community events, the group strongly advocated for the development and provision of local modern healthcare services.
In 1887, members of the Society also played an active role in the founding of the University of Oregon Medical School, demonstrating the Society’s early commitment to the advancement of regional medical care, which would continue over its 136-year history.

Drawing from the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland records, this exhibit traces the local impact of the MSMP over its history through a showcase of the group’s most notable activities, including community health education programs, emergency medical services, disaster planning, and vaccination and disease awareness campaigns.

Those who can’t visit in person can read the curators’ accompanying zine, “M2FO: Building Awareness, Taking Action.”

Maria Cunningham, M.L.I.S.  
Director of Special Collections  
OHSU Historical Collections & Archives

A New Exhibit at Stanford Medicine

“Sam McDonald: A Stanford Pioneer” is a new exhibit that was unveiled at Stanford University’s Lane Medical Library in August 2022. The exhibit was created by Dr. Drew Bourn, Lane Library’s Historical Curator, with a layout designed by Lane’s Access Services Specialist Katie Stinson. The exhibit profiles one of the earliest Black figures to play a significant role in the history of Stanford Medicine.

Sam McDonald (1884-1957) was born in Louisiana but came to California as a child with his family. He left school by the seventh grade to help with the family’s farm work. When his family relocated again to Washington state, McDonald returned to California and settled in the San Francisco Bay Area. He was soon working as a teamster at Stanford University and joined the teamsters’ union. It wasn't long before he also took on many other jobs on the campus and the nearby town of Mayfield. Taking correspondence courses and hiring Stanford students as tutors, McDonald also pursued an extensive and self-
directed education for many years. Dealing in local real estate and working as a private detective in San Francisco, he soon had enough money to begin making substantial purchases of land near the Stanford campus.

When Stanford’s School of Medicine established a convalescent home for children in Palo Alto in the early 20th century, McDonald dedicated a significant amount of his free time to supporting “the con home” and the young patients there—including entertaining them with his stories and music, establishing a victory garden during WWII, and hosting massive barbecues for volunteers who did maintenance work on the grounds. When McDonald passed away in 1957, he left two-thirds of his estate to Stanford and a third to the convalescent home.

I chose McDonald for an exhibit out of an interest in highlighting an early Black figure in Stanford Medicine’s history. Because Stanford Medicine administrators did not begin admitting Black students or hiring Black faculty until the second half of the twentieth century, looking for an earlier Black figure meant looking instead to the School’s staff.

For the exhibit I secured permissions for images from the Stanford University Archives, San Mateo County Parks, the Whittier Museum, the California State Library, and the California State Railroad Museum. The physical exhibit will remain up until August 2023. An online version of the exhibit will remain on the Stanford Medical History Center’s website indefinitely and can be found here: https://laneguides.stanford.edu/sam-mcdonald/home

Drew Bourn, Ph.D.
Historical Curator
Lane Medical Library
Stanford University

The Wood Library-Museum Apgar Collection Digitization Project

If you were born after 1953, chances are that you were given an Apgar score in the first minutes of your life. Originated by Virginia Apgar, MD (1909-1974), an anesthesiologist and pioneer perinatologist, the score evaluates the health of newborns and has saved millions of lives around the world. In July, 2022, the Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology (WLM) began a project to digitize its collection of the personal papers of Virginia Apgar, MD. The work will continue into next year. The digitized collection will be made available on the WLM and other websites, including the Illinois Digital Archives.
This project is supported in part by an award from the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board, through funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, National Archives and Records Administration. For more information, please contact Judy Robins, Archivist, by e-mail: j.robins@asahq.org, or by telephone: 847-268-9168.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

W. Bruce Fye Medical History Research Travel Grant

The W. Bruce Fye Center for the History of Medicine is pleased to announce its annual W. Bruce Fye Medical History Research Travel Grant. The grant is available to physicians, historians, medical students, graduate students, faculty members, and independent scholars who wish to use archival and library resources at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. The grant (up to $1,500 in one calendar year) may be used for transportation, lodging, food, and incidental expenses relating to the research project. It is available to residents of the United States and Canada who live more than 75 miles from Rochester.

The W. Bruce Fye Center for the History of Medicine houses archival collections that contain official records of the Clinic and its administrative offices, official and unofficial publications, departmental annual reports, committee minutes, photographic and moving images, sound recordings, personal papers, and memorabilia relating to the Mayo Clinic, its mission, programs, and people. To search the archival holdings, please visit the online catalog (MAX).

The W. Bruce Fye History of Medicine Library is a specialized library housing important collections in the history of medicine and allied sciences. Several thousand volumes of rare medical classics (from 1479) and early journal literature (from 1665) comprise the core collection of primary literature on all aspects of medicine and allied fields. More recently published histories, biographies, facsimiles, and other support materials comprise the remainder of the collection of some 23,000 total volumes. Special strengths include anesthesiology, cardiology, dermatology, immunology, ophthalmology, and neurology. The library also has a large collection of Mayo physician bound reprints. To search the library catalog, please visit the library website (http://librarycatalog.mayo.edu/).
Applicants should send by e-mail as attachments the items listed below to Renee Ziemer:

- Abstract of your project (250 words) stating the general scope and purpose
- How historical resources at Mayo Clinic will further your research
- Abbreviated curriculum vitae (3 pages or less)
- One letter of reference that includes comments on your project

Timeline for 2023 grant:
Application deadline (all materials): November 1, 2022
Successful applicant(s) will be notified by December 31, 2022
Visit(s) to Rochester must be completed by December 15, 2023

Contact information:
Renee Ziemer, coordinator
W. Bruce Fye Center for the History of Medicine & Mayo Historical Suite
Mayo Clinic
200 First Street SW
Rochester, MN 55905
Telephone: (507) 284-2585
E-mail: ziemer.renee@mayo.edu

Weill Cornell Medicine's Heberben Society Lecture Series

Please join the Heberden Society at Weill Cornell Medicine for a history of medicine lecture series during the 2022-2023 academic year:

October 26, 2022, 5:00 PM EST
Janet Golden, PhD
Professor Emerita, Department of History, Rutgers University
“Patients, Syphilis, Disability, and Medicine: A History”
Register at https://weillcornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hpWxJ-1uRLqnkC0VVV4qFA

January 18, 2023, 5:00 PM EST
Wangui Muigai, PhD
Assistant Professor, African and African American Studies and History, Brandeis University
The Watermark

Volume XLV
Number 4 (Fall 2022)

“Infant Mortality, Race, and the American Roots of a Health Inequality”
Co-sponsored with the New York Academy of Medicine
Register at https://weillcornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Gcfn1OeyT16znW4jxIMHnw

March 2, 2023, 5:00 PM EST
Naomi Rogers, PhD
Professor in the History of Medicine and of History, Yale University
“Health Activism and Community Control: American Medicine in the 1960s and 1970s”
Co-sponsored with the Weill Cornell Medicine Division of Medical Ethics
Register at https://weillcornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Scor_mhES9KYjFBObrkago

April 26, 2023, 5:00 PM EST
Jaipreet Virdi, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Delaware
“Hearing Happiness: Deafness Cures in History”
Register at https://weillcornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_8aA5vs2EQWasKa0Qtos-zA

Research Awards at the Osler Library

Each year the Osler Library offers a number of awards and travel grants to local and international historians, physicians, graduate and post-doctoral students, and others whose research touches upon the history of medicine. From now through 6 January 2023, we are accepting applications for the following awards/grants and kindly ask you to share this notice widely within your own networks, listservs, and social media outlets to help us spread the word.

Dr. Edward H. Bensley Osler Library Research Travel Grant - Awarded to those whose project requires travel to Montreal to consult material in the Osler Library, such as rare books, archives, and artifacts. Each year up to $5000 (CDN) in awards will be made available to one or more individuals who require a minimum of two weeks to carry out their research.

Mary Louise Nickerson Travel Grant - This award is open to scholars who need to travel to Montreal to carry out research using Osler Library collections (e.g., rare
books, archives, and artifacts). Awards totalling approximately $13,000 (CDN) are typically divided among a small number of scholars, whose individual awards depend upon need and duration of visit.

Dr. Dimitrije Pivnicki Award in Neuro and Psychiatric History - Awarded to one or more students and/or scholars wishing to carry out research utilizing the rich archival and monographic holdings at McGill University, such as the Osler Library (including the Penfield Archive), the Montreal Neurological Institute, and the McGill University Archives. Awards totalling approximately $13,000 (CDN) are usually divided among a small number of scholars, whose individual awards depend upon need and duration of visit.

* * *

Additional information about terms, requirements, how to apply, previous winners, and general information about the Osler Library can be found at: https://www.mcgill.ca/library/. The library’s collections are listed in the McGill Library Catalogue and the Osler Library Archives Collection website. Please note that all research in this grant cycle must be completed during the next fiscal year, 1 May 2023-30 April 2024. We welcome all further inquiries at osler.library@mcgill.ca

Thank you for your help in sharing information about these opportunities!
BOOK REVIEWS


New York Eye Infirmary was founded in 1820 by Edward Delafield (1794-1875) and John Kearny Rodgers (1793-1851) both of whom had been trained in medicine in New York and London. Drawing inspiration from the institution that became Moorfield’s Eye Hospital in London, they founded the infirmary to care for eye diseases among the poor. After seven months of being open three afternoons a week, they had treated 436 patients. Fundraising began in 1821. In 1823, Delafield started presenting lectures on eye diseases, thought to be the first lecture series on eye diseases in the U.S.

Official addition of the Otology Service occurred in 1840. At some point before 1864, the infirmary was renamed the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary (NYEE). In 1864, some of the NYEE surgeons formed the New York Ophthalmological Society, the oldest ophthalmological society in the U.S. Between 1863 and 1864, the NYEE treated more than 6,000 eye patients and more than 900 ear patients. Freed slave David McDonogh (1821-1893) was the first African American ophthalmologist in the U.S., and through the support of NYEE cofounder John Kearny Rodgers, served on the infirmary staff for 11 years.

The Nose and Throat Department was a new addition in 1873. Work on a new five-story building began in 1893. By the end of the 19th century, the staff had grown to 31 surgeons, 56 assistant surgeons, and 12 house staff. In 1903, in response to continuing financial deficits, inpatient ward rates were increased to $7.50 a week for those who could afford it. Semi-private rooms increased to $15 a week and private rooms to $25 a week.

In the 1950s, the staff had increased to about 200 physicians and surgeons, more than 50 registered and practical nurses, and more than 30 aides, along with orderlies and personnel in dietetics, laundry, social service, accounting, public relations, and other departments. In the years 1959 and 1960, there were 96,550 clinic visits and 7,071 inpatients. In the early 1960s, due to need for additional space and for upgrading physical facilities, property adjacent to the infirmary was purchased, and fundraising for a new building was begun, with it opening in 1967.
A 14-story staff residence building with 123 apartments was completed in 1974. In response to the changing health care environment of the 1970s, NYEE established an affiliation with New York Medical College in 1980. In 1995, the Department of Ophthalmology had more than 145,000 outpatient visits, and the *U.S. News and World Report* ranked NYEE as one of the top ophthalmology and otolaryngology specialty care centers in the country. In 1998, in response to changing health care reimbursements, NYEE became part of Continuum Health Partners, which in turn merged in 2013 with Mount Sinai Medical Center to form the Mount Sinai Health System.

Interspersed with the historical narrative are numerous sidebars describing various events, new technologies, inventions, services, research, and achievements, as well as many half-page to full-page biographical notes on prominent individuals. The contributions and activities of the Infirmary are also considered within the larger historical context, such as the impact of two world wars, the Great Depression, and being located within a large metropolitan area.

This celebratory volume effectively captures the pride of the personnel of this institution in its contributions in clinical care, research, and residency education. The book is attractively illustrated with numerous photographs and images. Appendixes include an 11-page timeline, lists of persons in past and present leadership positions, and bibliographical notes. The author is a writer of non-fiction books and institutional histories.

**David A. Goss, OD, PhD, MLS**
Emeritus Professor of Optometry
Indiana University

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The author, Elizabeth Reis, is an historian and professor of medical ethics at Macaulay Honors College, City University of New York. Her previous work, “American Sexual Histories,” which she edited and released in 2012, was a precursor to this 2021 volume. Her current publication is a carefully designed and well-referenced treatment of a unique, but related, subject: the history of intersex in the U.S. This volume takes the reader on a chronological journey describing the past and present medical ethics issues involved in the treatment of patients presenting with bodily diversity or intersex: a state
where a body does not fit into a binary (male/female) for reasons of chromosomal, hormonal, and/or anatomical variance.

The preferred term to describe this bodily state has varied over the centuries, e.g., *hermaphroditism, intersex, disorders of sex development (DSD)*. Reis reveals that the terminology itself has been a long-standing source of considerable divisiveness within the medical establishment. Today, the medical literature uses *disorders of sex development (DSD)* as the predominant nomenclature, resulting from a 2005 conference held by the Lawson Wilkins Pediatric Endocrine Society and the European Society for Paediatric Endocrinology, also known as the Chicago Consensus Conference. Despite the formal stance of that conference’s terminology declaration, the label *disorders of sex development (DSD)* is still not universally supported, however. Reis reflects upon the perspective of some intersex individuals when she states on pages 173-174: “The term ‘disorders of sex development’ may promote clarity for doctors who diagnose patients with such conditions and provide some relief for patients and parents, but it has produced rancor among some adults who identify as intersex. Specifically, they reject the word ‘disorder.’ Doesn’t ‘disorder’ imply that something is seriously wrong and needs to be corrected?”

The book consists of seven chapters, a preface, acknowledgments, introduction, and a note about terminology and illustrations. In addition, there is an index and a copious listing of bibliographic references. Of the book’s 262 pages, more than 90 pages are comprised of references, along with the index. For researchers working in this subject area, the notes are a treasure trove of academic and factual sources. Overall, the book will be a useful aid for a wide variety of individuals, inclusive of professionals and laypersons. Certainly, the book could be very effective as a textbook or required reading in a medical ethics course.

Reis makes note of the sensitive nature of the medical illustrations and photographs within the book, offering readers this explanation on page xxiv, “I sincerely hope they do not offend readers; they are meant to illuminate doctors’ past motivations, not endorse them.” She has judiciously selected a minimal quantity of visual items to provide educational context. In addition, to safeguard the privacy of still-living individuals, photographs and drawings date from 1940 or earlier. No contemporary visual content (of a medical nature) is included.
The first three chapters span historical events pertaining to intersex from the early colonial times to the Victorian period in America. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, given the lack of scientific knowledge characteristic of that era, religious or mythical explanations were often used to understand certain events. For instance, it was believed that the birth of an intersex baby was a punishment by God, inflicted upon parents who were somehow depraved or aberrant in their behaviors or lifestyle.

In the nineteenth century, social conventions were of utmost importance, with the desire for propriety and respectability serving as the driving force for all aspects of life, including medical decision making. Surgical and reconstructive interventions for intersex patients became widespread. It was thought that a conventional marriage was the preferred state for members of the citizenry and every effort was made to create “marriage-able” individuals by “fixing” these patients. Driven by the mores of the times, the societal need to foster the development of heterosexual adults continued to strongly influence the type of medical care provided to these patients well into the twentieth century.

The final four chapters further describe the evolution of modern medical care for intersex individuals, from the introduction of psychometrics, (i.e., it became commonplace for care to include treatment of the patient’s psyche as well as the physical being) to the bioethical changes in perspective characterized by informed consent becoming codified into law in the 1950’s. In many cases, it now became acceptable to “wait and see” in regards to reconstructive intervention. The rush to surgical “normalization” that had been seen in earlier times began to lose its ubiquity. Concomitantly, there was a strong movement to accept non-traditional, alternative lifestyles within a more diverse society.

A groundbreaking 1993 event described in the book’s final chapter is the emergence of the Intersex Society of North America. With the advent of that organization, intersex individuals had a platform and a voice to communicate about intersex-related issues, raise cultural awareness, educate the populace, and advocate for improved care to the benefit of both patients and families.

As discussed by Reis, intersex individuals continue to face a multi-faceted set of social, psychological, medical, and political hurdles. The preservation of autonomy, self-determination, and dignity in healthcare decision making remains a challenging task for physicians, patients, and families in this area of medical ethics.

Nancy Dupre Barnes, PhD
Independent Consultant
Overland Park, Kansas

Published just months before the Supreme Court of the United States’ decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, Ellen S. More’s *The Transformation of American Sex Education: Mary Calderone and the Fight for Sexual Health* could hardly be a more timely read for those interested in the history of America’s complicated relationship with sexuality and freedom of choice. More’s new book straddles the line between social history and biography, providing both an enlightening and sobering look at the evolution of sex education through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as well as a thoughtful examination of the life and work of one of the field’s most visible and influential pioneers.

Mary Calderone started down the path to becoming the face of American sex education at an early age. The daughter of a more bohemian father, noted photographer Edward Steichen, and a more conservative mother, she would be shaped by two polar opposite attitudes toward sexuality. Her mother would lock her hands in metal mittens during the night to prevent masturbation, an experience that had a profound effect on Calderone’s sense of self and sexual wellbeing and that she would use as a touchstone throughout her career. That all people, including children, are entitled to experience their bodies without fear or shame and that sexual pleasure is an essential part of one’s health were among Calderone’s most important ideas, ones that set her apart from many of her contemporaries who were focused on issues related to family planning, marital relationships, and later risk reduction.

While the book does provide valuable insight into Calderone as a person, there are times when she all but disappears from the narrative. She is undoubtedly at the heart of the story More is telling, in the sense that the book most closely chronicles the work of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), the advocacy group Calderone established in 1964 and which grew to become an influential force in efforts to bring comprehensive sex education into American schools. However, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to do SIECUS or Calderone justice without explaining the cultural changes that preceded the sexual revolution of the 1960s, how and why the sexual revolution experienced the backlash it did, and what its enduring legacy has been. It is a complicated topic, and More has tackled it in a way that should be approachable for those who do not already have an established knowledge of the history of sex education while still bringing something new to the table for those who do.
In describing Calderone’s highly public work as the face of SIECUS, More delves into the tactics of the American religious right and how opposition to sex education in schools fits into conservative politics. It is striking how many of the strategies used against Calderone and SIECUS in the late 1960s are still very much familiar in 2022. Opponents of comprehensive sex education made sure that anywhere Calderone traveled, she was met with negative press and angry attendees at her talks. Much of this opposition was based in misinterpretations of her and SIECUS’s work, and often levied by people from outside the communities trying to implement sex education programs or simply hear Calderone’s ideas. While many schools saw the value in more positive sex education for their students, they quickly grew to fear the backlash they would face, creating a chilling effect that can still be felt in many ways today.

Throughout *The Transformation of American Sex Education*, More takes a skillfully measured approach to celebrating Calderone’s legacy. She is honest in her portrayal of Calderone as a complicated figure in the fight for better sex education in America. Calderone’s mission to normalize sexuality at all life stages and to construct an idea of sexual health that includes pleasure was certainly progressive for her generation, and her training as a doctor brought a much-needed medical perspective to a health issue that had historically been neglected in the patient-physician relationship. She fought for sexuality education that was positive, shame-free and grounded in science. She strongly believed that sex is not just something people do, it is an essential part of who people are. At the same time, Calderone took more conservative stances when it came to contemporary feminism, homosexuality, and changing sexual values among youth. More emphasizes that while Calderone should certainly be remembered for her contributions to the sex education movement, she was not perfect. The fight for progress never is.

Vanessa Formato
Archivist, Abraham Pollen Archives
Massachusetts Eye and Ear
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