

SEP 29 1941

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King's Library  
Microphotography

P.

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

OF NEW YORK

NEW YORK ADDRESS:

49 West 49th Street  
New York

Cable: Rockfound  
New York

LONDON OFFICE:

c/o The Royal Society  
Burlington House  
Piccadilly, London, W.1.

Telephone: Regent 3335

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10th June, 1941.

Mr. David H. Stevens,  
The Rockefeller Foundation,  
NEW YORK CITY.

Dear Dave,

To-day I saw Mr. Morshead for a second time. It was the first opportunity I had to talk with him since my original visit at Windsor Castle.

Attached is a letter I hoped to send to you through J. Maynard Keynes, but for reasons which are indicated in his letter to me, a copy of which is enclosed, I did not do so. Obviously, I was not then in a position to send you this letter, even through the pouch, which I now have the privilege of using, without first referring the matter again to Mr. Morshead. This has now been done. With all due respect to Mr. Keynes, I felt his argument then, and this has proved to be the case in my subsequent discussion with Morshead, was more mathematical and theoretical than real. The stark fact remains that important documents of unique character are seriously exposed to the danger of bombing and fire. And the most immediate way to save them would be through microfilming. I showed my letter to you of April 28th to Mr. Morshead, and it has his complete approval. He indicated it was a correct statement of the situation. I of course did not show him the letter of Keynes, but indicated its context, through a previous letter to him, a copy of which is attached.

Morshead is very anxious that something be done, and is certain that if he should bring the matter to the attention of the King it will have the latter's approval. He stressed the urgency of the time factor; the early summer months would be ideal for the microfilming. Morshead felt that if funds were provided and modern microfilming apparatus used with which work could be done rapidly, British personnel could very likely be secured to do the work.

About Dr. van Puyvelde, concerning whom J.M. has written, Mr. Morshead indicated that he has put van P. to work on study and publication of the art and other treasures relating to the Lowlands, that is Flemish Art, and has provided £200 for publication and other expenses in connection with van P.'s work. He did not feel, however, that van P. was the person to put in charge of the team to do the

microfilming work. This would have to be organized and directed by Mr. Morshead himself, because of the unusual nature of the documents and because of the fact that the field is one in which van P. is not particularly an expert.

In order to catch up on time, I am sending you a cable, a copy of which is attached. Unfortunately, the only way I know of sending this documentation is by the pouch, which is a slow tedious process, taking a minimum of three weeks. The material, of course, cannot be sent through the usual channels because of the special nature of the documentation, and for the obvious reasons of its confidential character.

If there is any way in which you could indicate by 'yes', or 'no', the likelihood of your collaboration, and on what level, it would be useful to know this at an early date, so that further steps may be made in the negotiations with Morshead.

While taking up the problem of the King's Library as a specific item, there are, of course, considerable groups of outstanding documents, again of a unique character, which are in such Libraries as those of the Colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, the Royal Society, and so on. These local private collections are not taken care of through the grant of \$30,000 to the P.R.O., through the American Council of Learned Societies, which deals with quite a different set of documents which are under governmental control.

I think it would be possible without too great difficulty to make a rapid survey of outstanding material which exists in single copy, and which is of international historical importance, and which is in danger of destruction.

I would like to have your reactions on this, and any suggestions you may care to make, in case you are favourable to the continuation of such aid.

As ever,

O.B.

C O P Y

SEP 29 1941

King's College,  
Cambridge.

May 1st, 1941.

Dear Dr. O'Brien,

I have been greatly embarrassed to decide whether it would be proper for me to carry the enclosed letter which you sent. On reflection I feel that I ought not to do so, for the following reasons:-

1. I do not think that such a letter could go without the express authority of Morshead. It is not clear to me that he has seen and approved this letter. No doubt he expressed a natural anxiety, but there may be other reasons which he did not disclose to you why the position is not better than it is.

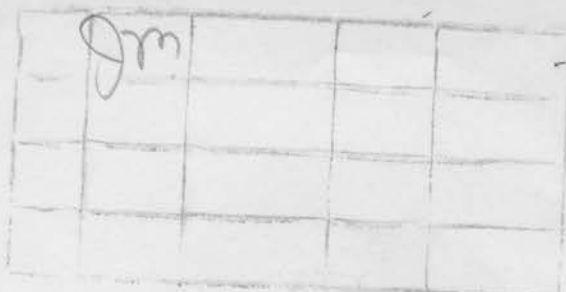
2. I cannot believe that it can be financial reasons in the strict sense which are interfering. What we are suffering from in this country is not shortage of local sterling money, but the limitation of resources and labour available for this kind of purpose. I may be either than the danger is not so great as it appears at first sight, or that the King has deliberately refrained from making demands on the Office of Works, who are tremendously occupied in similar activities directed immediately to war purposes. Thus it is not, I should have thought, a matter of finance.

This does not mean that I do not intensely sympathise with you in wishing these precious articles to receive all possible care, and that I do not immensely appreciate the thought which governs your letter. But I do feel that this is the sort of request that ought not to go forward to your Foundation unless it is quite clear that the authorities here wish it to go forward and that, as I say, is not clear to me on reading your letter.

I am hoping very much to pay a visit to the Foundation when I am in New York, as I am particularly anxious to see Mr. Willits.

Yours sincerely,

Signed: J. M. KEYNES.



21st May, 1941.

The Librarian,  
Windsor Castle,  
WINDSOR,  
Berks.

Dear Mr. Morshead,

Since my recent visit to you I dictated a letter covering my interview with you to Mr. David Stevens, the Head of our Division of Humanities in our New York office. In this letter I outlined some of the types of material which are present in the Library of the King which you showed to me, particularly the collection of original drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, and others; the original and unique copies of diaries of various members of the Royal family from the time of George II; and all the sets of letters of the Prime Ministers; the Stuart papers, and so on. I indicated the danger to which this unique material was exposed through possible bombing, or fire from incendiaries, and expressed what I understood to be your desire to have the material copied on to microfilms in order to preserve it. I also mentioned the second matter, namely the building of an air-conditioned tunnel which was actually either under consideration, or construction, and would be something of a much larger undertaking.

When I learned that Mr. J. Maynard Keynes was leaving for America, I sent him a copy of the letter to Mr. Stevens, as a means of transmission by hand, and indicated that if for any reason he felt it unwise to carry the letter, to let me know, or to destroy it. He replied pointing out that without authority from you, he did not feel the letter should go. As he was leaving on the following day, I was not able to get in touch with him to indicate that I had asked your permission to refer the matter informally to my colleagues in New York. Naturally I did not want to proceed further by sending off a note to America without seeing you again beforehand, in view of the comments from Mr. Keynes.

I was wondering if you were to be in London any time in the near future. If so, we might arrange to see each other.

Recently I had a most interesting talk on the subject of libraries with the two secretaries of the Royal Society - Professor A. V. Hill and Professor Egerton - and with Mr. Lancaster-Jones of the Science Library at South Kensington. The matter of microfilming was taken up, and I learned a number of points concerning some of the



difficulties with which libraries are confronted due to problems arising from copyright laws. I have reviewed the interview in a memorandum to Mr. David Stevens, and at the same time have asked him to give me further information about the availability of microfilm apparatus, as well as reading machines for the same, and comments on the present laws controlling copyrighting, microfilming, and similar procedures which prevail in the States.

It will be a pleasure to see you again, and to have a further discussion on some of these matters.

Yours sincerely,

D. P. O'Brien, M.D.