

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION
OF NEW YORK

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29th April, 1941.

Dr. David H. Stevens,
Director, Division of Humanities,
The Rockefeller Foundation,
49 West 49th Street,
NEW YORK CITY.

Jan	AUG 27 1941	Jan	

Dear Dave,

The enclosed note to you of April 28th on the Library at Windsor, is of course a confidential document, and of course should be so treated in any consideration which the Foundation should give to it.

I am sending this through the courtesy of Mr. J. Maynard Keynes, with the understanding that if he so desires he may either not send it, or dispose of it.

Warm regards,

As ever,

O'B.

This copy sent Leland at
the ACLS, and returned
by him, 2 Sept. 41

Jan

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28th April, 1941.

Dr. David H. Stevens,
Director,
Division of Humanities,
The Rockefeller Foundation,
49 West 49th Street,
NEW YORK CITY.

Dear Dave,

Yesterday afternoon was spent at Windsor. I was invited there by Willard Connely of the American University Union, and was the guest of Canon and Mrs. Ollard of the Cloisters of the Castle at Windsor. Canon Ollard introduced me to the King's Librarian at the Castle, Mr. O. F. Morshead. Young, in his late 40's, of wide knowledge and unusual vision, and clearly an expert in his field, he creates a most favourable impression of a progressive leader in the field of Humanities.

In accompanying me around the Library of the King, Mr. Morshead showed me a number of priceless treasures, and incidentally told me of the danger to which they were exposed due to the possibility of bombing, or of fire. There was no time to go into as many of the details as I should have desired, but one or two examples chosen from citations throughout the afternoon of my visit may give you an/of some of the material which is there.
indication

Of a collection of 14,000 original drawings, of which I saw numerous copies in beautifully bound volumes, there were for example 900 of the originals of the total of 1500 of Leonardo da Vinci which exist in the world. These form material from which all the scholarly work in anatomy of early days has been drawn. In addition, there are a vast number of special works by Michael Angelo, Raphael, and others equally well-known. This collection of originals constitutes the biggest private collection of drawings in the world.

These drawings are housed in the second storey, counting from the top, of the Library of the Castle, which means that while the walls are some several feet thick the roofing and the flooring are of a much thinner composition, and would be totally

inadequate to prevent the penetration of bombs. If, as is now the case, an incendiary bomb was dropped on the roof, and on top of it a high explosive, the facilities in the grounds of the Castle would, it is my impression, be clearly inadequate to save these irreplaceable documents.

In addition, there is a most impressive array of private diaries in their original handwriting, with no existing copies, of the Kings and Queens, dating from George II to George V, along with the exiled Kings. Practically all of this material, and all of the other private letters of state of these periods, are housed on the bottom floor of the Library, in bound volumes. The material, of course, of George III contains priceless and most precious social and political documentation of the period which relates to the War of Independence in the States, and to that whole period.

I was shown likewise the complete set of the Diary of Queen Victoria, together with Princess Beatrice's re-writing of the Diary, also the whole Diary of George V, and the letters of Queen Victoria to the Prince Consort, the total of these representing some 300 volumes of the private archives of the royal family.

Also, I was shown the complete sets of the letters from the Prime Ministers of England from 1850 on to the present time. It was the custom, as you may know, for the Prime Ministers, after each session of the Houses of Parliament, to write a personal letter to the King, in which was interpreted the general significance of all measures of importance which were discussed during the session.

The Stuart papers, for example, which contain the political history of England in their original form, and which incidentally are uncopied, constitute 12000 volumes in all. Such extraordinary material as the letters and papers of all the descendants of James II after he left England are available.

This is a citation of a few of the more outstanding documents which are to-day exposed to thin roofs, to both bombing and fire from incendiary bombs, or to destruction by water following a fire bomb. The precautions which have been taken are, in my personal opinion, completely inadequate. The 900 original anatomical drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, for example, are merely covered with an outside sheet of asbestos, which would not at all, I believe, survive the types of fires I have seen during my short stay here in London.

The Librarian, Mr. Morshead, suggested the urgent need for the preservation of these documents from the possibility of total destruction. Such a loss in many ways could be compared to the loss of some of the great libraries of the world such as the Alexandrian, and others. The hording of the many precious documents in the cellars seems to me a totally inadequate measure of protection.

The two essentials which come up for consideration are first the duplication of the material by microfilm as a means of preservation. Mr. Morshead suggested that if arrangements could be made for the copying of the most unique MSS and Diaries of the greatest historical interest, and if they could be done in duplicate, one of each could be sent to a responsible library in America for the use of students in history, politics, and the social sciences. There would of course be certain parts of the Diaries of the royal family which were of a purely personal nature which would obviously not be given out to other libraries. However, the mass of the material of historical importance would be available, it was pointed out, for scholars in other countries.

The second point was the question of a more or less permanent means of preservation in times of national danger. It so happens that there is under consideration, and I believe one part is under construction, the building of a bomb-proof, fire-proof shelter in a region of England which would be ideal, as in one of the limestone regions, where a tunnel could be constructed and air-conditioning installed as a means of protection from moisture and atmospheric changes, etc.

Thus the Foundation might aid in two ways. First, by an immediate measure to provide facilities for the copying of all the most valuable historical material which is, as yet, in its unique form, and which is clearly in imminent danger of destruction through bombing and fire. The second would be the question of aid on a more significant scale. Namely, that the Foundation would provide the necessary funds for the building of an adequate tunnel, with air conditioning, to take care of the treasures during the present time, or during any other national emergencies.

While the Librarian did not mention it, it occurred to me that dispersion of their present treasures in various underground places would, as an immediate emergency measure, be a wise precaution until a more permanent solution was available. The thing that is strikingly obvious to me is the critical necessity for the preservation of the material by microfilm.

In presenting the above impressions of my visit, I do so with clear regard to the fact that this was done without sufficient preparation of the detail necessary in an official request. It was evident, however, that the matter was of some urgency, and that the Librarian and others would greatly welcome any aid that the R.F. could give in this emergency. In comparison to previous grants of the Foundation for preservation of medical and surgical libraries, I feel that this store-house of valuable documentation should have a very strong claim for attention and for aid, both for its preservation and for the opening up of it for use to scholars in other countries.

I am sending this along through the kindness of Miss Polly Hill, daughter of Professor A. V. Hill, and niece of Professor Maynard Keynes. The matter is naturally one about which I could not cable you in any detail, but which I give you in the above

resumé in the hope that you will be able to give me an indication one way or the other as to any possible interest the Humanities may have in this field.

Incidentally, in connection with the building of an adequate tunnel there would be accommodation for the preservation of original treasures in painting to the extent of some £5,000,000.

To me this looks like one of the most interesting possibilities for aid from America that I have seen.

o/s