

Archives from the pioneers of modern genetics to be brought together for the first time

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The Wellcome Library is to bring the papers of the pioneers of modern genetics together in one place for the first time as part of a ground-breaking digitisation project, 'Modern Genetics and its Foundations'.

Tens of thousands of notes, letters, sketches, lectures, photographs and essays, produced by the key players in the discovery of the structure of DNA and the development of genetics - including Francis Crick, James D Watson, Rosalind Franklin and Maurice Wilkins - will be freely available online.

These vast collections contain iconic documents, everyday exchanges, complex research notes and personal ephemera and highlight the extraordinary networks of insight and inspiration behind pivotal moments of scientific discovery. The material will be released in phases from autumn 2012.

Working in partnership with Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, USA, The Churchill Archives Centre, the University of Glasgow, King's College London and UCL (University College London), the archival papers of James D Watson, Rosalind Franklin, Sydney Brenner, Lionel Penrose, J B S Haldane, Guido Pontecorvo, James Harrison Renwick, Malcolm Ferguson-Smith and Maurice Wilkins will be digitised. They will join material from the Wellcome Library's own holdings, including the papers of Francis Crick, Fred Sanger, Arthur Ernest Mournant, the MRC

blood group, Hans Gruenberg and Gerard Wyatt.

The material will offer a comprehensive picture of the complex relationships between the scientists unlocking the secrets of the structure of DNA, in their own words, and give researchers and curious minds access to the personal and professional thoughts, blind alleys and breakthroughs of the circle of brilliant minds whose ideas transformed our understanding of the matter of life.

The Wellcome Library's 'Modern Genetics and its Foundations' project is the first phase of a major digitisation programme that will create an integrated online research resource, featuring digitised books, archives, films, photographs and audio covering every aspect of the history of medicine and biomedical science.

Simon Chaplin, Head of the Wellcome Library, says: "We are thrilled to be working with five world-class libraries and archives to make these outstanding collections freely available alongside our own holdings. Together, they will offer an unparalleled research resource that documents one of the most significant periods of scientific innovation in human history."

Provided by Wellcome Trust

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