

Stephen Hawking's archive, office acquired for UK public

May 27 2021, by Sylvia Hui



Lucy and Tim Hawking stand with the wheelchair used by their late father Professor Stephen Hawking which has been acquired by the Science Museum Group, in London, Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Science Museum Group and Cambridge University Library will announce that they have acquired the historic contents of Professor Stephen Hawking's office (going to SMG) and his archive (going to CUL). Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth

London's Science Museum and the Cambridge University library said Wednesday they have acquired a large collection of items belonging to late physicist Stephen Hawking, from his personalized wheelchairs to landmark papers on theoretical physics and his scripts from his appearance on "The Simpsons."

The entire contents of Hawking's office at Cambridge—including his communications equipment, memorabilia, bets he made on scientific debates and office furniture—will be preserved as part of the collection belonging to the Science Museum Group.

Hawking occupied the office at the university's department of applied mathematics and [theoretical physics](#) from 2002 until shortly before his death in 2018.

Highlights will go on display at the London museum early next year. Museum officials are also hoping to create a touring exhibition in the U.K. before setting up a permanent display in London.

Meanwhile, his vast archive of scientific and personal papers, including a first draft of his bestselling "A Brief History of Time" and his correspondence with leading scientists, will remain at Cambridge University's library.

The institutions' acceptance of Hawking's archive and office meant that his estate settled 4.2 million pounds (\$5.9 million) in inheritance tax.

This was done through a U.K. government plan which allows those who have such tax bills to pay by transferring important cultural, scientific or historic objects to the nation. Artefacts accepted under the plan are allocated to public collections and available for all.



Kate Perks, Senior Collections Care Conservator stands with a portrait of Professor Stephen Hawking by artist Fred Cuming, which has been acquired by the Science Museum Group, in London, Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Science Museum Group and Cambridge University Library will announce that they have acquired the historic contents of Professor Stephen Hawking's office (going to SMG) and his archive (going to CUL). Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth

Hawking studied for his PhD at Cambridge and later became the university's Lucasian Professor of Mathematics, the same post that Isaac Newton held from 1669 to 1702.

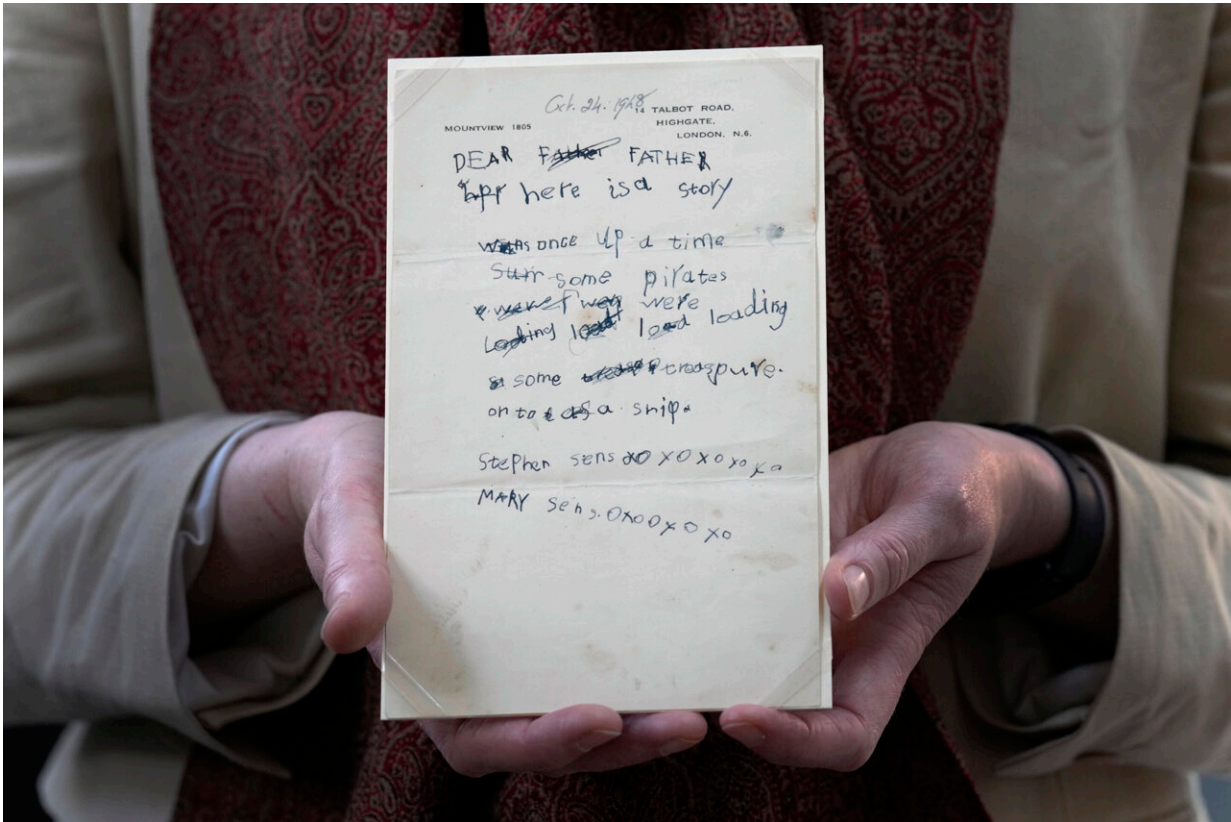
Cambridge's acquisition of the 10,000-page archive means that Hawking's papers will join those of Newton and Charles Darwin at the

university library, where they will soon be free for the public to access.

"The archive allows us to step inside Stephen's mind and to travel with him round the cosmos to, as he said, 'better understand our place in the universe,'" said Jessica Gardner, the university's librarian.

"This vast archive gives extraordinary insight into the evolution of Stephen's scientific life, from childhood to research student, from disability activist to ground-breaking, world-renowned scientist," she added.

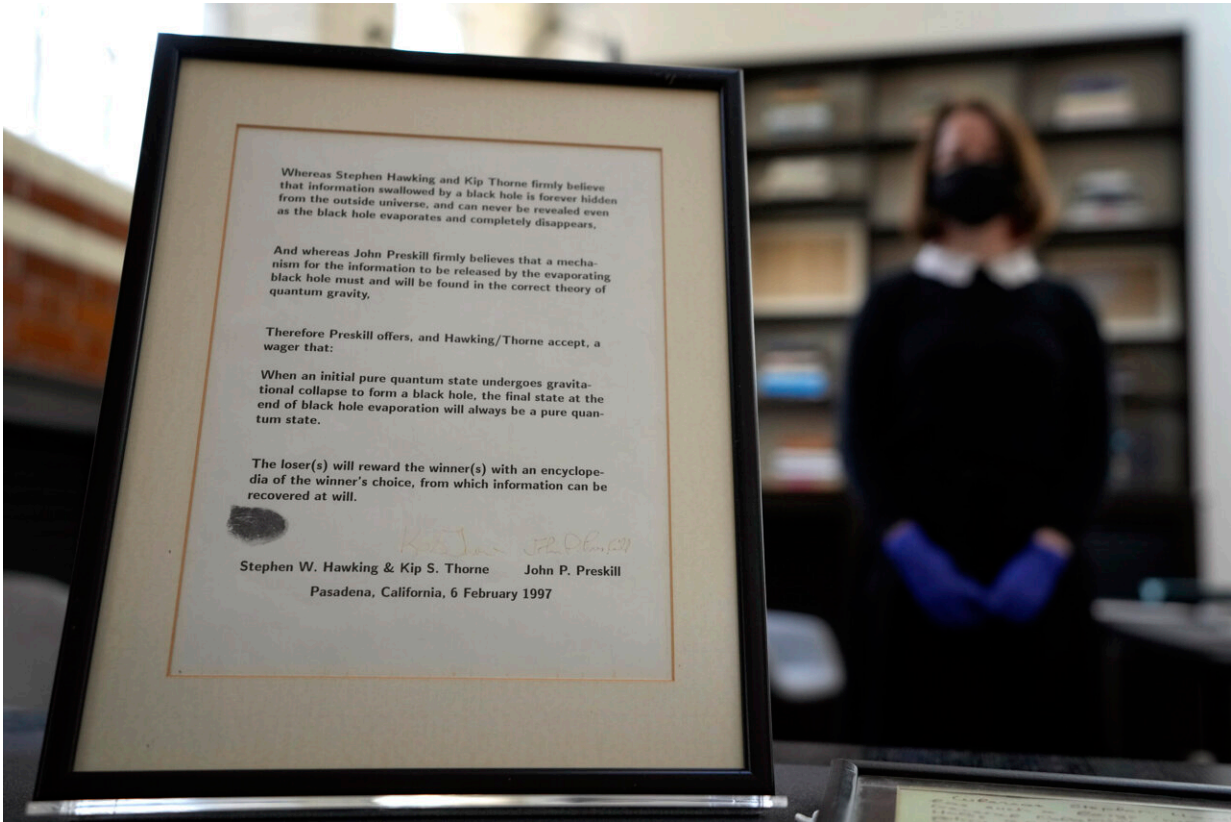
Diagnosed with motor neuron disease at 22 and given just a few years to live, Hawking survived for decades, dying in 2018 at 76. His work on the mysteries of space, time and black holes captured the imagination of millions, and his popular science books made him a celebrity beyond the preserves of academia. Hollywood celebrated his life in the 2014 biopic "The Theory of Everything."



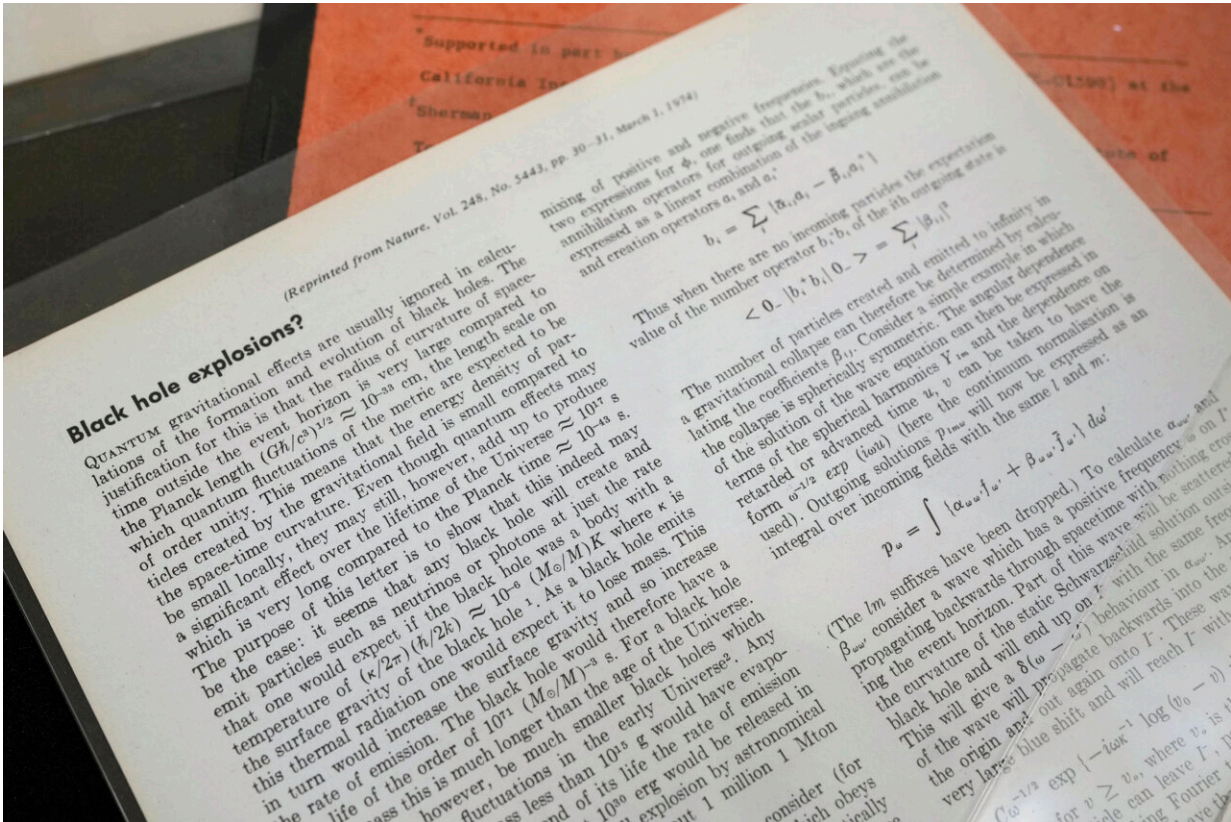
A letter written by Professor Stephen Hawking and his sister Mary to their father when they were children, which has been acquired by Cambridge University Library, in London, Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Science Museum Group and Cambridge University Library will announce that they have acquired the historic contents of Professor Stephen Hawking's office (going to SMG) and his archive (going to CUL). Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth



Kate Perks, Senior Collections Care Conservator stands with the wheelchair used by Professor Stephen Hawking which has been acquired by the Science Museum Group, in London, Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Science Museum Group and Cambridge University Library will announce that they have acquired the historic contents of Professor Stephen Hawking's office (going to SMG) and his archive (going to CUL). Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth



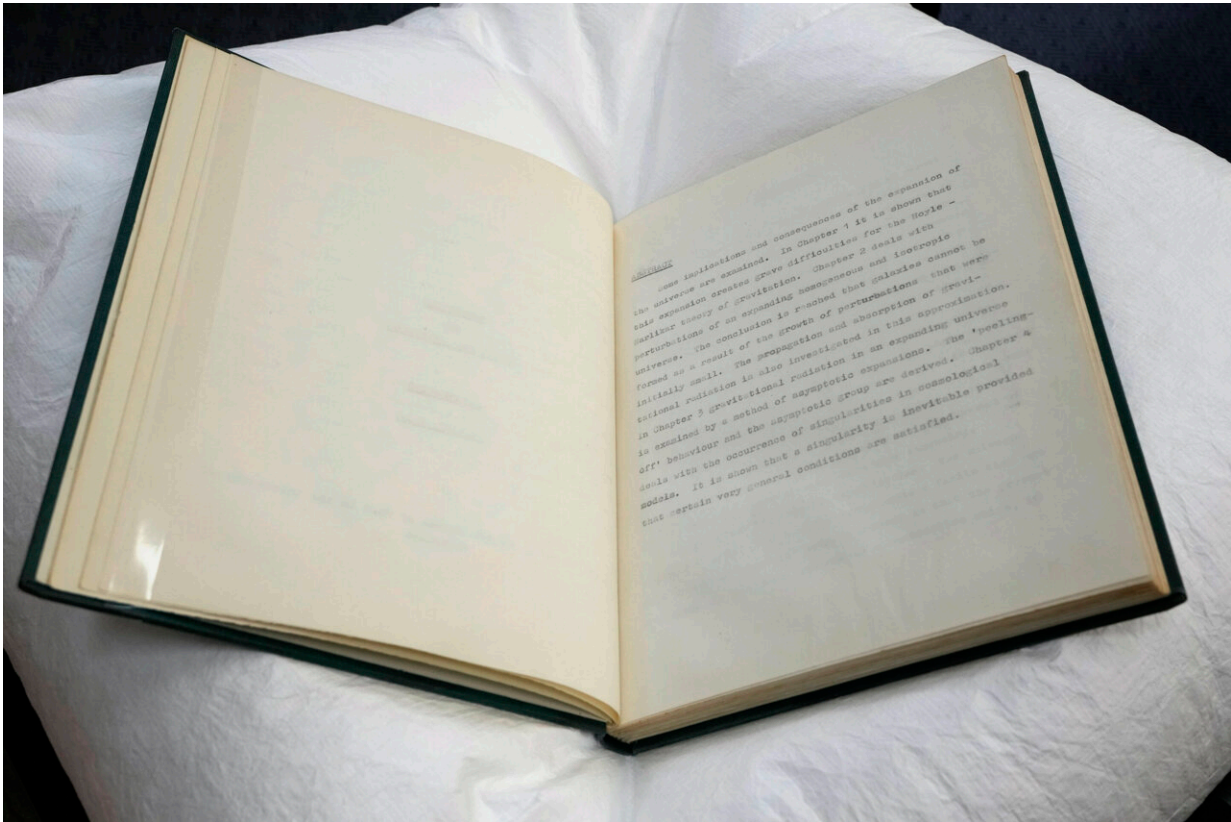
A letter and bet made by Professor Stephen Hawking and Kip Thorne with John Preskill on whether information can be recovered from a black hole, signed with Hawking's thumbprint, which has been acquired by the Science Museum Group, in London, Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Science Museum Group and Cambridge University Library will announce that they have acquired the historic contents of Professor Stephen Hawking's office (going to SMG) and his archive (going to CUL). Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth



Examples of Professor Stephen Hawking's work Black Hole Explosions which predicted Hawking Radiation, along with copies of various scientific papers which have been acquired by the Science Museum Group, in London, Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Science Museum Group and Cambridge University Library will announce that they have acquired the historic contents of Professor Stephen Hawking's office (going to SMG) and his archive (going to CUL). Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth



The Franklin Medal awarded to Professor Stephen Hawking which has been acquired by the Science Museum Group, in London, Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Science Museum Group and Cambridge University Library will announce that they have acquired the historic contents of Professor Stephen Hawking's office (going to SMG) and his archive (going to CUL). Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth



One of five copies of Professor Stephen Hawking's PhD thesis, Properties of Expanding Universes, which has been acquired by the Science Museum Group, in London, Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Science Museum Group and Cambridge University Library will announce that they have acquired the historic contents of Professor Stephen Hawking's office (going to SMG) and his archive (going to CUL). Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth



A CBE medal awarded to Professor Stephen Hawking which has been acquired by the Science Museum Group, in London, Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Science Museum Group and Cambridge University Library will announce that they have acquired the historic contents of Professor Stephen Hawking's office (going to SMG) and his archive (going to CUL). Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth



Professor Stephen Hawking's tortoiseshell spectacles with analogue sensor are displayed in front of an early generation voice synthesiser box used by Stephen Hawking, which have been acquired by the Science Museum Group, in London, Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Science Museum Group and Cambridge University Library will announce that they have acquired the historic contents of Professor Stephen Hawking's office (going to SMG) and his archive (going to CUL).
Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth



The Papal Medal awarded to Professor Stephen Hawking which has been acquired by the Science Museum Group, in London, Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Science Museum Group and Cambridge University Library will announce that they have acquired the historic contents of Professor Stephen Hawking's office (going to SMG) and his archive (going to CUL). Credit: AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth

Hawking's children, Lucy, Tim and Robert, said they were pleased that their father's work will be preserved for the public for generations to come.

"My father would be so pleased and I think maybe at the same time, just a tiny bit overwhelmed that he was going to form part of the ... history of science, that he was going to be alongside the great scientists, the people whose work he really admired," Lucy Hawking said.

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