

11th March 1935

Dear Dr Allen,

Many thanks for your letter. I did not know what the rule was, but I think you have adopted a sound one in paying something towards the expenses of not more than six members of the Visiting Committee.

One point, which I hoped to talk over with you would, perhaps in any case, be best taken up by letter. That concerns the work of the British Association Committee on Biological Measurements, of which I am Secretary, and about which I think I wrote to you some little time ago.

At our first appointment in 1927, Calman, at our request, got Archives established at South Kensington for the reception of bodies of original data, too extensive for complete publication, but which could, by making such a deposit, be made accessible to future students. I think we may rely on the Museum to preserve and index the deposits with all care. They cannot in any case, supersede the need for institutional archives, such as I was in charge of at Rothamsted, and of which I have no doubt you have a nucleus at Plymouth. What they should do of immediate value, is to relieve authors of scientific papers and editors of journals of some of the embarrassment which at present they feel in the matter of the publication of records. It may safely be

said that journals often publish unnecessarily prolix data at considerable expense and on the other hand, that students searching the literature are often much hampered by the non-publication of original counts or measurements, which have been replaced by more or less inadequate summaries or graphs.

A number of the leading biological journals, including the Proceedings of the Royal Society, have now agreed to print permanently in their notes to contributors, some such instruction as the following:

"Contributors are requested to note that bodies of quantitative biological data, too extensive for complete publication, should be summarised for discussion and the originals deposited in the Archives established for this purpose at the Natural History Museum, South Kensington."

That actually is the wording chosen by the Journal of Bacteriology, but all the others are in nearly equivalent form. It is, I think clear that the utility of the Archives will increase in proportion as their existence is widely known, and that though there are doubtless masses of detailed observations which should properly be preserved at Plymouth, yet some of the contributions to the journal of the Association would be of greater permanent value, if their observational bases were made publicly accessible. This, also in many cases, would allow the journal to be content with quite a brief summary

of the results in so far as they are relevant to the question under discussion. I should be glad therefore, if you would seriously consider the possibility of inserting such a notice in the Journal of the Association and of utilising the Archives at South Kensington for such material as are likely to be of more than institutional interest.

The question of the institution of archives at Plymouth is a larger one owing to the expense necessarily involved and is closely bound up in my view, with the provision of technical statistical assistance to the workers at the Laboratory. I should be glad in any case, to know your views as to what organisation in this respect has been already developed and might reasonably be aimed at.

Yours sincerely,

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