

Robert D. Hicks, Ph.D.
Director, Mütter Museum/Historical Library/Wood Institute for the History of Medicine
William Maul Measey Chair for the History of Medicine
The College of Physicians of Philadelphia
19 South 22nd Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103
215-399-2301
rhicks@collegeofphysicians.org

Description of organization:

“The Birthplace of American MedicineSM” and the oldest professional organization in the country, The College of Physicians of Philadelphia was founded in 1787 when 24 physicians gathered “to advance the science of medicine and to thereby lessen human misery.” Today, over 1,500 Fellows (elected members) continue to convene at the College and work towards better serving the public. Throughout its 200 year history, the College has provided a place for both medical professionals and the general public to learn about medicine as both a science and as an art. This historic spirit continues in our current mission: advancing the cause of health, while upholding the ideals and heritage of medicine. The College collections exist within the Mütter Museum and the Historical Medical Library.

The Mütter Museum is one of the oldest medical museums in the country and houses one of the greatest collections of 18th and 19th century medical teaching specimens. The collection is comprised of approximately 25,000 objects including human remains (over 1,200 biological wet specimens, 1,400 human bones, lithics, dried preparations and corrosions); 12,000+ medical instruments and apparatus, primarily dating between 1750 and the present; approximately 400 anatomical models in plaster, wax, paper- mâché and plastic; 1,700 historical medical illustrations in the form of lantern slides, photographs and prints; and memorabilia of outstanding physicians and scientists. Our collections provide a particular insight into human biology and the history of medicine and medical education. By placing medicine and science in a broader context, we encourage patrons to consider the cultural and social aspects of health and medicine.

Many of our collections reflect the interest and involvement of Philadelphia physicians in national and international affairs. During the Civil War, items from the Mütter Museum were loaned to the Army to assist in the training of surgeons; in exchange, the Museum received specimens and photographs (described below) of battle injuries from the Army Medical Museum in Washington D.C. (now the National Museum of Health and Medicine). In 1865, a messenger from the Surgeon General conveyed to the Museum a specimen connected with one of the nation’s most tragic events: a “piece of the thorax of J. Wilkes Booth, assassin of President Lincoln,” which had been removed during the autopsy conducted by Philadelphia surgeon Joseph Janvier Woodward. The Museum continues to receive medical instruments and specimens donated by Fellows, other physicians, and their families. Recent acquisitions include a 1949 Emerson iron lung, 670 brain specimens encased in acrylic, and a large collection of 19th-century fracture splints.

Established in 1788, the Historical Medical Library was Philadelphia's central medical library for over 150 years, serving its medical schools, hospitals, physicians and other health professionals. Today, it is an independent research library devoted to the history of medicine and serves hundreds of scholars, health professionals, students, and popular writers each year.

The College's collection of early printed books includes more than four hundred incunables, or editions printed before 1501. Thanks to a recent grant from the William Penn Foundation, we can claim that ours is the best-cataloged incunabula collection in the world. Among our more than 12,000 other rare books are the majority of editions that laid the basis of modern biomedicine—including one of the world's best copies of William Harvey's *De motu cordis* [On the Motion of the Heart] (1628) which first described the circulation of the blood, and two copies of *De humani corporis fabrica* [On the Fabric of the Human Body] (1543) by Andreas Vesalius, which was responsible for the later development of both modern anatomy and modern medical illustration. Among the Library's first acquisitions was the founding book of modern pathology, *De sedibus et causis morborum* [On the Seats and Causes of Disease] by Giambattista Morgagni, published in Venice in 1761; it was presented by the author to visiting Philadelphia physician John Morgan, who later donated it to the College.

In addition to its rare books and 19th- and 20th-century collections, the College Library is notable for its manuscripts and archives. Within this collection are the College's own archives, the archives of other Philadelphia medical institutions, and letters, case books, and student notebooks that document the personal life and professional practice of doctors in the Philadelphia region and around the world.

The College Library also owns several collections of printed books associated with individual Fellows. Most recently, forensic psychiatrist Robert L. Sadoff donated the Sadoff Library of Legal Medicine and Forensic Psychiatry to the College. Before arriving at the College in 2002, Dr. Sadoff's four thousand volumes comprised the world's largest private collection of books and pamphlets on these topics. There are many 19th century sources relevant to the state of psychological medicine in the Civil War era, including texts and hospital reports which give an intimate look at treatments for the mentally disabled.

Proposed work for an intern:

During summer, 2010, the College benefitted greatly from the work of three Haverford students. Two students compiled bibliographies and lists pertinent to a planned 2013 exhibit on Civil War medicine and the third began an annotated bibliography on medicinal astrology. As valuable as this work has proven, the work did not exhaust College resources and needs to be continued. The College, therefore, proposes a continuation of these two primary projects for interns who work in the Historical Medical Library.

The Civil War project entails searching through library materials, both published and unpublished, including images, to identify and describe resources germane to planning a major exhibit on Civil War medicine scheduled to open in 2013, *Broken Bodies, Suffering Spirits: Medicine in Philadelphia during the Civil War*. Proposed research may include preparing annotated bibliographies for posting on the College web site or the Commonwealth of

Pennsylvania's Civil War web site: <http://www.pacivilwar150.com/>. Some research may serve other immediate priorities of the Civil War History Consortium in Philadelphia, mindful that observance of the Civil War Sesquicentennial begins this spring. Research may take place in both the Historical Medical Library and Mütter Museum. Interns may research and draft text for small exhibits.

The second project involves completing a bibliography on medicinal astrology, focusing on research that was not accomplished last summer (search through journals). This bibliography needs to be completed and developed into an on-line finding aid. This project will also become a small library exhibit and the student intern will have an opportunity to curate it.

Both projects are scalable to the abilities and backgrounds of the students and the time they can devote. Projects are supervised by the librarian, museum curator, or the director.

Skills and experience offered:

The internship affords a rare experience to work with primary materials within one of the most important special collections libraries in the country. Students would learn archival methods, cataloguing, and electronic organization and management of records. Students with some skills in librarianship, archives, or information technology would be valuable for College work. Students would need to be meticulous, careful with rare and fragile materials, and be well organized. An ability to express oneself well in writing is important.

Challenges for undergraduate students:

This work requires maturity and self-discipline in attending to the meticulous requirements of working with old documents and objects: sensitivity to wear and tear, respect for the materials, and a sense of their value. The work may be semi-independent in that the student may be working out of sight of the librarian but will need to be inquisitive and not hesitant about asking questions.

Rewards for interns:

As noted above, this internship is a rare opportunity to work directly with primary materials in the history of medicine and learn the protocols for such work. The College draws much interest each year from prospective interns, although few are chosen. The College places priority on providing students with meaningful and necessary work. It is important to the College to work with "feeder" institutions of higher learning to create more understanding of the importance of historic collections in scholarship and public understanding.

Conditions of work:

Work takes place during normal weekday working hours, Monday-Friday. No evening or weekend work is anticipated. No travel is anticipated.

Supervising the student:

The librarian or curator will train and directly supervise the student(s). The director (Hicks) will oversee the student's work.