

Finding Aid to the Records of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology  
Albin O. Kuhn Library & Gallery, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

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**Records of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology**

Size of Collection: 113,305 items; 156.5 linear feet

Accession numbers: MSS9602; SARCV200603

Records created by: American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

**Short Description of Collection**

The collection of records of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) documents the society from its founding in 1906 through the present. This collection contains materials relating to the Association's Officers including correspondence and reports. There are records covering the incorporation of the society and the Journal of Biological Chemistry and the formation of the Journal of Protometrics. The ASBMB collection includes the many committees that were formed over the years; some of these committees no longer exist. This collection contains numerous records of various meetings held by ASBMB over the years. Meetings of the executive board date back to 1906 and annual meetings begin in 1934 and continue to 2002. Organizations affiliated with ASBMB, most through an executive officer's membership, are also included in this collection. The collection is organized into five series: Officers and Executive Council, Publications, Committees, Meetings, and Affiliated Organizations.

## Historical Note

The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) was organized in December 1906, as an offshoot of the American Physiological Society (APS). The American Society of Biological Chemists (ASBC) changed their name to ASBMB in 1987 after molecular biologists threatened to split the society. The American Physiological Society was created in 1887 with just twenty-eight members but by 1906 had grown considerably. Some APS members felt that the chemical side of physiology was not being fully addressed due to the many different areas of interest in physiology that were crowded within the society. Other members of the APS regarded the chemical side of physiology as outside the field of pure physiology. In addition, there was debate within the discipline of physiology as to where to place chemical physiology, under chemistry or under physiology? A chemical physiologist needed to have knowledge of organic chemistry and physiology in order to be successful. Indeed, new discoveries were leading to the inevitable conclusion that biochemistry was necessary to the solution of physiological problems. (Chittenden)

The progress that was being made in the field of biological chemistry led Dr. John J. Abel of The Johns Hopkins University to propose a meeting to organize an American Society of Biological Chemists. This organizational meeting took place on December 26, 1906 at the Hotel Belmont in New York City. Twenty-nine chemical biologists attended. They voted for the creation of a temporary organization with Russell H. Chittenden as chairman and William J. Gies as secretary. Under the Articles of Agreement, the society was governed by a council made up of nine members, who were selected by the members at the organizational meeting. The officers consisted of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The council would be made up of the four officers and five regular members of the society. The council was instructed to prepare a constitution, to be ratified by the members, and to call all future meetings of the society. A quorum of twenty members was needed to transact business for the society. Immediately the officers and council was elected. Officers consisted of Russell H. Chittenden, President; John J. Abel, Vice-President; William J. Gies, Secretary; and Lafayette B. Mendel, Treasurer. The additional members of the council were Otto Folin, Walter Jones, Waldemar Koch, John Marshall, and Thomas B. Osborne. Short biographies of the founding members of the society can be found in Chittenden's work.

It was voted a year later that in addition to the twenty-nine members in attendance at the organizational meeting in 1906, any biochemists who supported the supported the creation of the ASBC and wished to join could become charter members. This increased the charter membership to eighty-one. The first meeting of the Society after its organization was a special meeting held in Washington, D. C., on May 8-9, 1907. The APS and the Washington section of the American Chemical Society (ACS) held their meetings at the same time in Washington, thus allowing several joint sessions to be held. A decision was made to publish the papers presented at the annual meetings in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, under the title, "Proceedings of the American Society of Biological Chemists." ASBC continued its close relationship with the APS by forming the Federation of American Societies for Experimental

Biology (FASEB) with them and the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET) in 1911. The three groups' main objective was to coordinate the time and place of annual meetings and the arrangement of joint sessions. The general goal was to prompt a close and social affiliation between the three sister societies while at the same time to maintain their individual independence. An Executive Committee of the Federation (FASEB) was established and consisted of the presidents and secretaries of the constituent societies. (Chittenden)

The *Journal of Biological Chemistry* was incorporated in 1905 by Christian A. Herter, Edward K. Dunham, Alfred N. Richards, John J. Abel, and Reid Hunt, all of whom were charter members of the ASBC. In 1919, ASBC members met to discuss the incorporation of the Society in order to take control of the Journal of Biological Chemistry, Inc. Christian A. Herter had died in 1910 and a memorial fund, in the sum of \$40,000, was established by his friends and associates to further the interests of the Journal. ASBC was incorporated on September 12, 1919. On October 24, 1919, all of the capital stock of the *Journal of Biological Chemistry* and the securities of the Herter Memorial Fund were transferred to American Society of Biological Chemists, Inc. (Chittenden 69-73)

The society continued to grow, reaching over 11,000 members by 2005. One result of this growth was the establishment of an executive officer position. The executive officer would be in charge of the day-to-day running of the society and would serve as the manager of the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*. Robert A. Harte became the Society's first executive officer. Prior to the establishment of the executive officer position, there had only been an administrative assistant. Harte took the executive officer position beginning in September 1961. Upon Harte's retirement in 1977, Russell J. Hilmoe succeeded him. Charles C. Hancock succeeded Hilmoe in 1979 and served for many years.

Much of the historical information comes from Russell H. Chittenden's work, *The First Twenty-Five Years of the American Society of Biological Chemists*, published in 1945. Chittenden's history of the early years of the society is an account of the creation and growth of the society and of science in society. Chittenden, as the first President of the society was in a unique position to write the history of the society. There at its creation he was able to watch the society and the fields expand. A special note in the Scope and Content section can be found with more information about this book and its location within the collection. The American Society of Biological Chemists became the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in 1987 after the molecular biologists threatened to break away from the Society. ASBMB has continued to grow and currently has over 10,000 members and has created several new journals. The goals of ASBMB are " to advance the science of biochemistry and molecular biology through publication of scientific and educational journals (*Journal of Biological Chemistry*, *Molecular and Cellular Proteomics*, *Journal of Lipid Research*, *Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Education*), organization of scientific meetings, advocacy for funding of basic research and education, support of science

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education at all levels, and promoting the diversity of individuals entering the scientific workforce."

Information in this Historical Note was drawn from:

"About ASBMB." American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. Accessed February 14, 2008 from  
<http://www.asbmb.org/asbmb/site.nsf/main/aboutasbmb?opendocument>.

Chittenden, Russell H. *The First Twenty-Five Years of the American Society of Biological Chemists*. 1945.

## **Scope and Content Note**

This collection contains the records of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB), 1906-2005. The collection covers the organization of the society in 1906 as the American Society of Biological Chemists and continues through to the present. The collection is divided into five series that reflect the society: Officers and Executive Council, Publications, Committees, Meetings, and Affiliated Organizations. Contained within these series are the documents of the various committees, individuals, and groups responsible for the running of the society. The majority of the collection covers the last half of the twentieth century. Not all subseries are listed in the scope and content, for a full list of each series and sub-series, see the "Organization of Collection."

### **Series I. Officers and Executive Council**

Boxes 1-19, contains the records of the Officers and Executive Council. Subseries one, contains the correspondence and papers of the society's Presidents, beginning with Hubert B. Vickery in 1950. The papers of the Presidents prior to Vickery were not found amongst the society papers. Presidential correspondence is arranged by the order in which they served. Dates correspond to the range of each president's correspondence and not specifically to when he or she was in office.

Subseries two, contains the correspondence and papers of the society's Secretary, beginning with D. W. Wilson in 1925. Secretariat correspondence is arranged by the order in which they served and similarly to the order of presidential correspondence. The papers of E. H. Stotz and Phillip Handler contain records discussing the history of the society and should be useful for tracing the society's history. Under Secretary A.K. Balls, 1942-1946, records concerning "Post-War Problems" can be found. These problems deal with returning military men who sought information on education and programs of the biochemical sciences.

Subseries four, the largest, contains the papers of the Executive Officer, a position created in 1961. Executive Officer materials are arranged into two sub-subseries: correspondence and memos. Within the correspondence sub-subseries, the material is divided by type of mail and arranged chronologically: personal, outgoing, and incoming correspondence. This subseries contains the correspondence of the first three executive officers, Robert A. Harte, Russell J. Hilmoe, and Charles C. Hancock. At the end of this subseries is various miscellaneous correspondence and memos.

Subseries five, contains Association Legal Documents. This includes the articles of incorporation and correspondence with legal advisors. Correspondence with legal advisors, Albert S. Davis, Jr., Harold L. Stowell, Frank H. Weller, Jr., and Steptoe and Johnson are the bulk of this subseries. Some of the legal correspondence deals with disputes over publishing rights and the Journal of Biological Chemistry (JBC).

### **Series II. Publications**

Boxes 19-29, contains materials related to publications. Subseries one, a small subseries, contains copies of ASBMB News, newsletters, and correspondence relating to these publications. The correspondence only dates from 2000-2002. The newsletters date from 1992-2001 and copies of ASBMB News date from 2001-2005 but are incomplete, the bulk are from 2004 and 2005. This subseries contains a CD-R disc with pdf files.

Subseries five, which is large and varied, contains materials related to the Journal of Biological Chemistry (JBC). The correspondence concerns both the general and the specific. Some of the issues concern copyright and JBC publishing with Williams and Wilkins. Correspondence with legal advisor Albert S. Davis and various officers reveal that there was some debate over the running of the JBC and the Christian A. Herter memorial fund (see 1956). Also included are copyright renewal certificates and discussions on copyright law revisions. Subseries five also contains financial information on the JBC. This includes correspondence, publication costs, expenses, and profit and loss statements. Also included are requests for permission to reproduce, the JBC's articles of incorporation from 1905, various historical materials, and microfilm correspondence.

Subseries seven contains miscellaneous publications and ad hoc committees involved in publications. Some subjects include the search for a new editor and the future of the JBC as well as publications like, "Careers in Biochemistry and Trends in Biochemical Sciences."

### **Series III. Committees**

Boxes 29-65, contains materials related to activities of ASBMB's various committees and is the largest series in the collection with 36 Boxes. This series contains 28 separate subseries and covers some dates as early as 1906 all the way to 2005. This series is not arranged in alphabetical or date order as some committees were added to the original alphabetical order. These newer records came with an additional donation of six Boxes in August 2006 and were fit in as best as they could be.

Subseries one contains the records of the Membership Committee. The activities of this committee were placed first because it was the largest committee (27 Boxes), with the most materials. The membership committee is broken down into several parts. The first being correspondence. Address service requests are mostly requests for address mailing lists by companies and organizations. ASBMB policy is not to give out classified address labels, so most answers were in the negative. Committee correspondence contains information about new members, but also other committee matters. Within general correspondence, there are inquiries into becoming a member and some correspondence related to dues. Dues correspondence deals mostly with late payments, lost payments, incorrect payment forms, and unknown payments. "Dear Colleague Letters," mailings to members, and reports to members are mostly form letters sent out to members. The mailings contain original material sent out to members such as ballots, newsletter type reports, and important society information

about meetings. Within the Membership Committee subseries there are two sets of member files. The first set of member files are arranged in date order according to member status in a specific year (i.e. "Deceased 1941-1946"). The second set of member files are arranged alphabetically by the last name of the member according to status (i.e. "Deceased, Ba-Bi"). This set retained its original order as presented to the archives. These documents are primarily of note card size and were in ringed hard plastic or leather binders. Each binder was labeled with a membership status, Deceased, Resigned, etc and cards were alphabetical within the binders. This set of records was part of the additional six Boxes donated in August of 2006. The sub-subseries, "Member Files - Individuals" contains individual member files. Original folders have been cut and included in the new folders to retain information that was written on the outside of the original folders.

Subseries two is ad hoc committees. The ad hoc committees are committees, which only met for a few years. They were organized to address a specific question or problem and then were disbanded. For example, one ad hoc committee deals with the revision of the society's constitution and by-laws. The ad hoc committee on by-laws revisions contains some history of the society. Located within this ad hoc committee's files is charter member Russell H. Chittenden's history of the society written in celebration of ASBMB's 25th anniversary. This is a hardback copy of the history, published in 1945.

The remaining subseries are broken down by committee. Some are very short because the committee was short-lived. Some of the more important committees are listed. For a description of all committees see the "Organization of Collection."

Subseries seven is the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Minority Groups later known as Minority Affairs. Correspondence date August 31, 1979 contains historical information about the committee.

Subseries fifteen is the Committee on the Relations of Biochemists to the Reorganization of the Sanitary Corps. This committee was dissolved in 1949.

Subseries sixteen is the Educational Affairs Committee. This is a large subseries, dating from 1959-1994. In this subseries there are multiple folders consisting of correspondence about the Latin American Program created by ASBMB to sponsor and encourage science education and scientific cooperation with Latin America. These files date from 1989 to 1994.

Subseries twenty-one is the Public Affairs Committee which later became the Public Affairs Advisory Committee. There were no records for the committee during 1977 included in the collection. Correspondence from October 1986 contains a letter to Mikhail Gorbachev over the release of Dr. David Goldfarb; it also contains newspaper reports about the incident. Located within this subseries is correspondence with Peter Kyros. Kyros was retained by the American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) and the Biophysical Society as well as by ASBMB. Kyros provided legislative services for the societies before the Congress and the Executive Branch Agencies over the issue

of federal funding of basic biomedical research through the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

#### **Series IV. Meetings**

Boxes 66-95, contain materials related to meetings that ASBMB was a part of, such as annual meetings, council meetings and other miscellaneous meetings. Subseries one is Council and Executive Board Meetings. Agendas, correspondence, minutes, and reports of the Council and Executive Board are included and arranged in date order, from 1906-2002. Some folders include various drafts of the meeting minutes, and sometimes there are several copies of particular meeting minutes.

Subseries two contains materials about ASBMB annual meetings, 1934-2002. Prior to 1971, ASBMB's annual meeting was held with FASEB. By 1971 the society decided to hold an annual meeting independent of FASEB. A great deal of planning went into this meeting and it was very successful. After 1971, ASBMB alternated between having an independent meeting, versus having it with FASEB or another society. For instance in 1974 and 1980, they met with the Biophysical Society. Beginning in the 1970s ASBMB began to work with Steven K. Herlitz who became their exhibitor and meeting manager. Most of his correspondence is located under annual meetings and exhibits. The abstracts from the annual meetings 1906-1941 were published in the Journal of Biological Chemistry. Subsequent abstracts were published in FASEB's Federation Proceedings. In this subseries is a bound copy of the proceedings, including abstracts, from the society's meetings dating from 1934 to 1941. Meetings from 1957-1960 only have general correspondence concerning the meetings but beginning with the 1963 meeting, the number, and variety of items increases. Some photographs from the Annual Meetings have been included in this collection. They have been put in separate folders under each year that they occur, namely 1985, 1986, and 1990. Box 73 contains a magnetic tape of a symposium given by a group of society Nobel Laureates at the 1973 annual meeting. The information on the Ad Hoc Committee on Procedures and the Program Planning Committee is located after the 1991 meeting starting in Box 85. Since the materials covered multiple meetings, it was placed at the end in chronological order rather than with the individual meetings. Fellowships that were awarded to individuals to attend the annual meetings follow. Materials for annual meetings that were part of the additional donation in 2006 were sparse and varied. Annual meeting materials from 1988-2002 are at the end of this subseries. These materials contain correspondence, meeting minutes, agendas, and other information. A separate folder about a lecture given by Elias Zerhouni at the 2002 annual meeting can be found in Box 88.

Subseries three contains materials related to Bioterrorism. This was an ASBMB symposium held in response to the threat of bioterrorism after September 11, 2001. This subseries consists of email correspondence from ASBMB leaders and responses from the society members. There is also general information about the issues concerning scientists and bioterrorism. Responses to the letters sent from ASBMB to

its members are arranged alphabetically by an individual scientist's last name. These materials date from 2001 through 2002.

Subseries seven contains records of the International Congress of Biochemistry (ICB), which met every 3 years. The subseries includes correspondence from the second Congress that meant in 1952. There are no records from the third Congress. The records from the sixth Congress are extensive because it was held in New York City and ASBMB was largely responsible for hosting the event. It should be noted that the US National Committee of IUB records have been included in series five. This was done to keep the meeting materials separate from the affiliated organization. Of particular interest is the correspondence pertaining to visa applications. Since this was an international meeting, scientists from all over the world attended. The correspondence revealed the difficulties of entering the US during the height of the Cold War in 1964. Visa materials are located in Box 91. The applications for subsistence allowance were not kept in original order of a separate folder for each country. The records have been combined to allow for maximum use of space. The original alphabetical order was retained but in the case where a country had only one or two applications, separate folders have been removed. These applications are found in Boxes 90 and 91. The records of the seventh through twelfth meetings of the ICB are included in this collection. After this the ICB records are incomplete.

Subseries eight contains records for the Gordon Research Conferences, 1953-1983. These records are mainly correspondence and handouts run from 1954 to 1976. Of special interest is a slide from the very first Gordon Conference held in 1953. Much of the materials on the Gordon Conference are included because of the involvement of Executive Officer, Robert Harte, in the conference, of which he was chairman of in 1969.

### **Series V. Affiliated Organizations**

Boxes 95-109, contains materials related to organizations affiliated with or in contact with ASBMB, 1933-2002. These organizations have been arranged alphabetically and then by date. Materials range from organizations with multiple folders and information over decades to organizations with only enough information for one folder. Some of the larger organizations have been arranged and separated into their own subseries and therefore are out of direct alphabetical order.

Subseries one contains Affiliated Organizations A-B, arranged alphabetically. There are several documents within this subseries that are interesting and should be highlighted. There are multiple folders on the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), an organization begun in 1848. Correspondence with the AAAS begins in 1954 and continues through 1991. In Box 95, Folder 19 is an article, "Social and Political Action of Scientific Societies," by Deal Wolfe written in 1969. Also in Folder 19 are controversial resolutions submitted to the AAAS at the 1969 meeting in Boston. These resolutions deal with social protests of the late 1960s. Of the three resolutions submitted it seems that only one was passed. The resolutions concern the Vietnam War, "Repression of Black People," which mentions

recent violence against the Black Panther Party, and a resolution on the equality of women in the sciences. These documents would be useful for anyone interested in the history of science and social protest.

Subseries four is the largest subseries with almost four Boxes of materials related to the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), 1933-1992 bulk. These materials include correspondence, meeting notes, and committee meeting records.

Subseries five contains records of the International Union of Biochemistry, US National Committee. These records date from 1953 to 1990. In Box 104, Folder 27, IUB Miscellaneous International Meetings, is a pamphlet for an "LSD Conference" from 1966. This conference was held at the University of California, Berkeley and the pamphlet contains short biographies on some of the major scientists who gave talks at the conference, among them is Timothy Leary. Also of note, is the talk Allen Ginsburg, gave entitled "Consciousness Politics in the Void."

Subseries seven is a broad category of materials organized under Government Science Organizations. Some of the organizations in this subseries are the National Academy of Sciences, the National Research Conference, the National Institute of Health, and the National Science Foundation. In Box 108, Folder 23 under the US public Health Service is the "Report of Delegation of American Biochemists to Russia" 1959. This report contains information on the Russian education system, biochemical facilities at Russian universities, and the general state of Russian biochemical research. The visit was made possible by an agreement between the U.S. Public Health Service and the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Health. American scientists were granted information and the freedom to study Russian sciences in a friendly exchange between international scientific communities. This document might be useful for anyone studying international scientific exchange during the Cold War.

## Organization of Collection

### Series I. Officers and Executive Council

Dates: 1925-2002, 1950-2002 bulk

Size: Boxes 1-19, 27.25 linear feet; 27,165 items

Subseries:

1. Presidency
2. Secretariat
3. Treasurer
4. Executive Officer
5. Association Legal Documents
6. Miscellaneous ASBM

### Series II. Publications

Dates: 1914-2005, 1946-2005 bulk

Size: Boxes 19-29, 13.75 linear feet; 9,155 items

Subseries:

1. ASBMB News
2. Editorial Committee
3. Editorial Board
4. Publications Committee
5. Journal of Biological Chemistry
6. Journal of Protometrics
7. Miscellaneous Publications and Committees

### Series III. Committees

Dates: 1906-2005, 1946-1990 bulk

Size: Boxes 29-65, 53.5 linear feet; 35,660 items

Subseries:

1. Membership Committee
2. Ad hoc Committees
3. Armed Forces Committee
4. Awards Committee
5. Committee on Biochemical Nomenclature
6. Committee on Clinical Chemistry
7. Committee on Equal Opportunities for Minority Groups
8. Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women
9. Committee on Human Biochemistry
10. Committee on Long-Range Goals
11. Committee on Plans for Scientific Meetings
12. Committee on Procedures
13. Committee on Reorganization of Administrative & Business Procedures
14. Committee on the Professional Training of Biological Chemists
15. Committee on the Relations of Biochemists to the Reorganization of the Sanitary Corps
16. Educational Affairs Committee
17. Feasibility Committee

18. Future of Biochemistry Committee
19. Nominating Committee
20. Past-President's Committee
21. Public Affairs Committee
22. Audit Committee
23. Finance Committee
24. Committee Appointments and Liaison Officers
25. Human Relations Subcommittee on Equal Opportunities for Women
26. Joint Steering for Public Policy Committee (JSPP)
27. Meetings Committee
28. Membership Task Force

#### Series IV. Meetings

Dates: 1906-2002, bulk 1934-2002

Size: Boxes 66-95, 42.35 linear feet; 28, 250 items

##### Subseries:

1. Council/Executive Board Meetings
2. Annual Meetings
3. Bioterrorism
4. Finance Meeting
5. Joint Meetings
6. Joint Steering for Public Policy Meeting
7. International Congress of Biochemistry, 1952-1982
8. Gordon Conference, 1953-1983
9. Miscellaneous Meetings and Conferences

#### Series V. Affiliated Organizations

Dates: 1933-2002, bulk 1946-1991

Size: Boxes 95-109, 19.65 linear feet; 13, 075 items

##### Subseries:

1. Affiliated Organizations A -B
2. Affiliated Organizations C
3. Affiliated Organizations: D-H
4. Affiliated Organizations: FASEB
5. Affiliated Organizations: IUB/IUPAC
6. Affiliated Organizations: I- Keystone
7. Affiliated Organizations: Government Science Organizations: NAS,NRC, NIH, NLM, NSF
8. Affiliated Organizations: M-Z

#### **Provenance and Acquisition Information**

This collection was donated by the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) under Executive Officer Charles Hancock in March of 1996.

#### **Processing Note**

This collection was processed under the supervision of Marcia Frank Peri, by assistants Rose King, Kristen Tranier, and Angelica Marini. The processing of the collection began in the Fall of 2003 and was finished in December of 2006. This was a very large collection with 211 banker Boxes donated. The existing collection is 109 Boxes. During the initial inventory, multiple copies were disposed of whenever there were more than two copies of a given document. General invoices, receipts and personnel information such as time sheets and payroll documents were also taken out of the collection. Plastic spiral binders and oversized folders were removed from the collection. A second deposit of materials in August of 2006 contained six additional Boxes. The initial organization of the collection was complete and the records from the additional Boxes were fit into the collection. The majority of the records were found to be in relatively good order since they were kept by ASBMB at their headquarters. The remaining records have been organized by type of activity based on the order in which they were received. Whenever possible the original order has been maintained. For the most part items are organized in chronological order, followed by alphabetical order.