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Our ref: ml/dls

Dear Michael

### Biographical Data

In my role as Editor-in-Chief of *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, I am writing to you about the provision of your own biographical materials for the Royal Society archives. These records provide an essential resource both for your future biographer, and also for the historical records of the Society. According to the rules of the Society, what you provide will be closed for 50 years after death, except to the writer(s) of your Biographical Memoir. Naturally, I very much hope these events are a very long way off.

The Society has a standard form which you were asked to fill in when you were elected, and I strongly urge you to bring this material up to date periodically. But this is only part of the information which would be of the greatest value to a future biographer. It would be very helpful if you were able to provide additional material of biographical interest. Here are examples of the types of information which are particularly valuable - some of these are simple to provide.

- (i) Curriculum Vitae. We are all constantly being asked to provide these for one reason or another and these are very valuable in obtaining a broad overview of your activities.
- (ii) List of publications. Again, we are constantly being asked for these and it should be easy to send a copy.
- (iii) Your own private account of your life and your views. A number of Fellows have kindly written essays about their life and these are incredibly valuable. When John Waldram and I wrote the biography of Brian Pippard, we discovered that he had written an excellent set of essays about the various facets of his life and science which we were able to use in the memoir.
- (iv) Information on any particularly important committees and projects in which you played a part.
- (v) Notes about your interests outside science. These are very helpful in giving a rounded portrait. For example, the delightful memoir of John Postgate in the 2016 volume of *BM* gives a wonderful picture of his distinction as a microbiologist and as a jazz performer and critic.



President Sir Venki Ramakrishnan  
Executive Director Dr Julie Maxton

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- (vi) Family history. If you have a note about your family history, that can be very helpful to the biographer. The range of backgrounds of Fellows is quite remarkable and sets the biography in context, as well as being inspirational for the reader.
- (vii) Imagery. This might include, for example, favourite portrait photographs or pictures in the lab or field. If there are particular discoveries, places (for example a laboratory), organisations or events with which you have been associated, some visual record (with a note of the copyright holder, if known) would be an invaluable resource.
- (viii) Published biographical essays. A number of our colleagues have been invited to contribute autobiographical essays for series such as *Annual Reviews*. These are very helpful in preparing the way for a full scale Memoir. A fine example is the essay 'An Accidental Career' by Geoffrey Burbidge in *Annual Reviews of Astronomy and Astrophysics* (DOI: 10.1146/annu9rev.astro.45.051806.110552), which Martin Rees and I are using in our Memoir of Geoff. You may have contributed similar memoirs.
- (ix) Links to, or copies of, interviews that you have given (print, film or audio).
- (x) Details of any provisions that you have made for long-term archiving of your personal collection.

I hope this gives you a flavour for the types of biographical materials which will enrich your biography.

Eventually we need to select a Memoir writer and it is very helpful if you could suggest someone who could write an authoritative and readable essay. These are often colleagues or former students.

All items should be sent to Keith Moore, the Royal Society's Head of Library and Archives ([library@royalsociety.org](mailto:library@royalsociety.org)). We would prefer files in a digital format as standard file types but hard copy material will be very acceptable. Please also contact the Library team if you have any questions about the types of material that may be suitable.

In addition to providing the above information, you can also contact the Library for advice on preparing your full papers for potential deposit in either the Royal Society archive or another suitable repository. Digital material should also be considered for transfer, but require careful management to ensure preservation.

The Fellows' records and the *Memoirs* are wonderful resources for the History of Science and we want them to remain of the highest interest and value to everyone. We will greatly appreciate whatever help you can provide.

All best wishes



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