

## GENETICS LIBRARY

The only library dedicated to the subject in Britain. However, it would be unreasonable to claim that we have a comprehensive and cohesive collection of books reflecting the history of the study of genetics here. There has been a Chair in Genetics since 1912, and Cambridge is believed to have established the first one in the subject, but Undergraduates were not awarded degrees in genetics until the 1960s.

The older books in the Library are presumably not based on the teaching of the subject, nor do they necessarily reflect the research interests of the staff : Most likely they form parts of the [more general] book collections of previous members of staff, though largely unidentified. Many are only tangentially related to genetics. The most noticeable 'collection' is that of R C Punnett, the first Balfour Professor of Genetics. All items dated before 1890, or signed by Punnett or other Department members, are kept in locked cabinets.

In addition to genetics, heredity and evolution subjects also include eugenics and aspects of human heredity, so there are some rather 'unfortunate' items in the cupboards. There are a lot of late C19 and early C20 books in various subjects, but not a large number in any single subject : eg zoology, general histories of science, plant propagation, anthropology.

Not all of the older books have been added to Newton, although a card catalogue does exist.

The Library also holds a very large collection of boxed reprints, arranged by author name, either of papers written by respected geneticists, or of genetics-related interest to early members of the Department, but they are unlikely to have been systematically collected. The collection is based around the reprints amassed by R C Punnett, but has since been added to. The dates of the most recent papers are probably 1984. None of these are on a public-access catalogue, though a presumably complete card catalogue exists. Some reprints allegedly have significant annotations, and some boxes contain lists of publications by certain scientists, but whether any of the reprints, or groups of them, are of any historical value is unknown. Apart from this large main sequence of reprints there are others collected by more recent members of staff, eg Professor John Thoday, some of which are in the attic, unsorted.

### Visiting the library

Members of HPS are welcome, in fact encouraged, to visit both these libraries, if only to browse the shelves and see what is held. Most books can even be borrowed. However, it is advisable to make an appointment for the first visit, as it is not easy to locate some items, especially in Plant Sciences.

E-mail is the best contact method: [library@gen.cam.ac.uk](mailto:library@gen.cam.ac.uk) and [library@plantsci.cam.ac.uk](mailto:library@plantsci.cam.ac.uk)