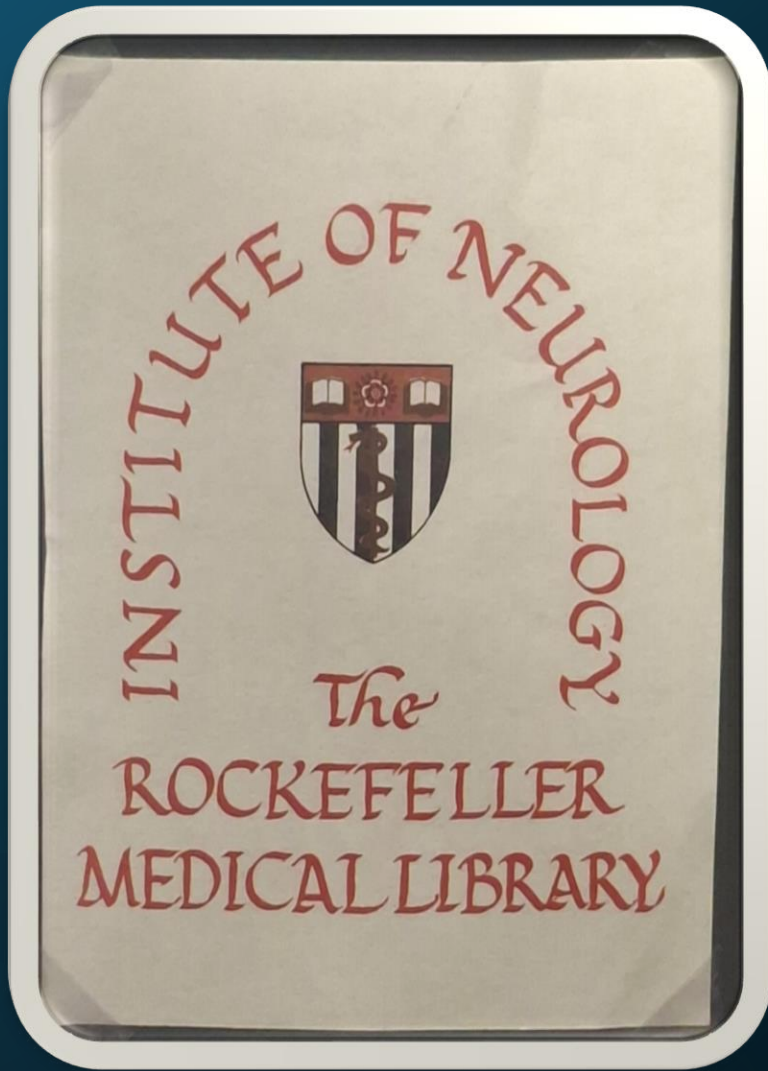


138+ Years and
Counting

The History of Queen Square Library and Archives





A display in Queen Square Library marking UCL200, ION75, and celebrating Queen Square Library and Archives' history over the past 138 years.

This display features photographs, objects, and documents from Queen Square Archives.

For further information, please contact:

- neuroarchives@ucl.ac.uk
- See also: www.queensquare.org.uk/archives
- [Selected content is available online](#)

1888-1949: Beginnings

Introduction

Queen Square Library started life being known as the Medical Library at the National Hospital for the Paralysed and Epileptic.

At the Medical Committee meeting on 3 February 1888, Dr. William Gowers proposed the idea of having a library. The Committee endorsed his idea later that month, and created the Library shortly afterwards, under the Hospital's management.

As the Hospital expanded and departments formed, some—like Pathology—developed their own specialist collections of books, journals and specimens. It's probable the Hospital's physicians also had their own personal reference collections. In time, the Medical Library developed too, through donations of books and journals, and by merging the personal and departmental collections into its own.

The Medical Library's location and visibility also improved, reflecting its growing importance – moving from somewhere in the Albany Wing basement to a sizeable room on the ground floor, facing Queen Square Gardens in the new Queen Mary Wing in 1938, to Alexandra House, 17/19 Queen Square (1962/3), and finally to 23 Queen Square (1981).

By the time the Hospital joined the NHS, the Medical Library was recognised as housing “a remarkable number of neurological works for a hospital of this size” and was serving “a large number of postgraduates who attend the hospital.”

A letter was read from Dr. Gowers suggesting the foundation of a Medical Library at the Hospital. but, owing to the lateness owing to want of time, the consideration of it was deferred to a future meeting.

J. Knight Jackson

Dr. Gowers' letter (deferred from last meeting) was read again, & it was resolved
"That it is desirable that a library of medical reference be established at the Hospital."

J. Knight Jackson

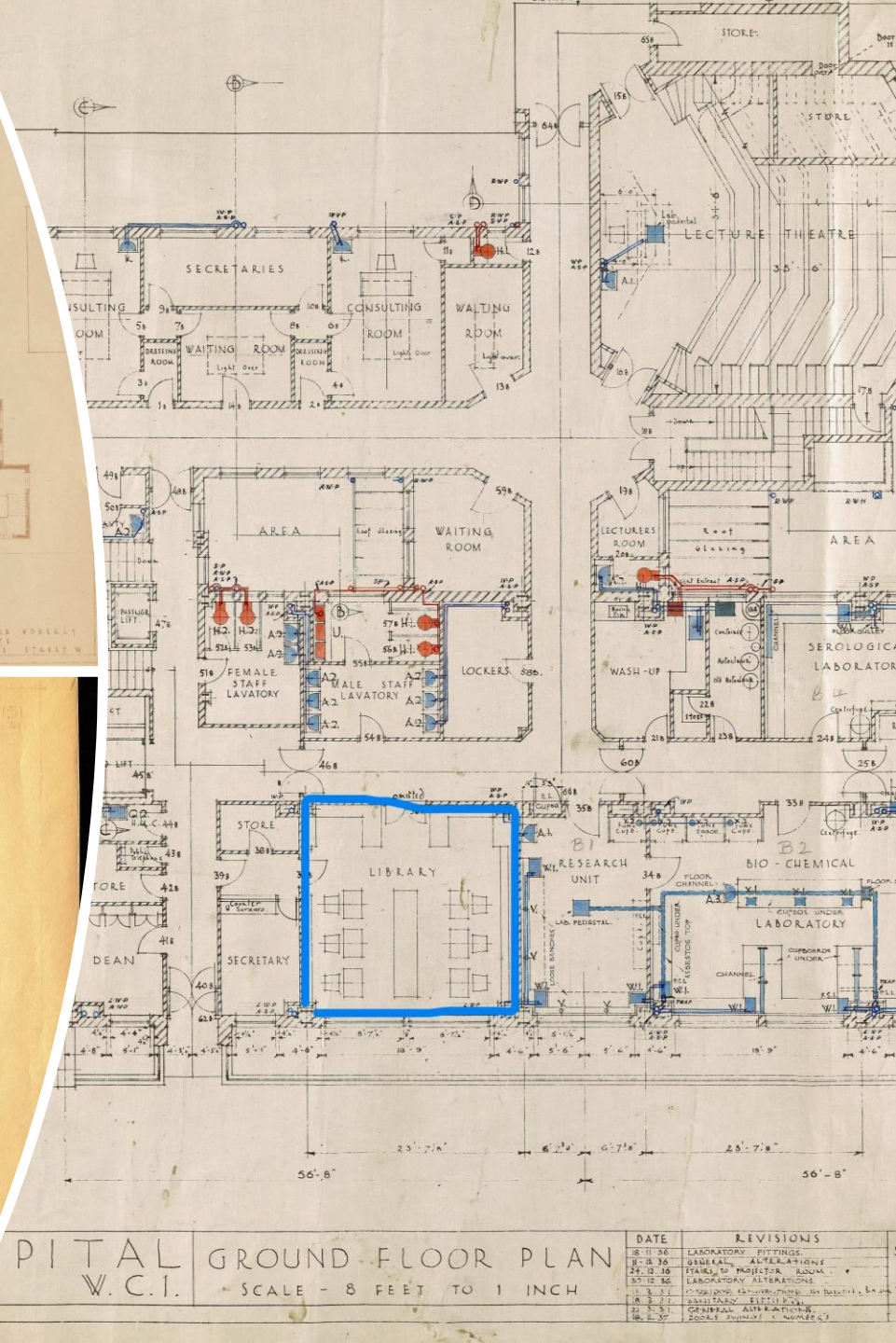
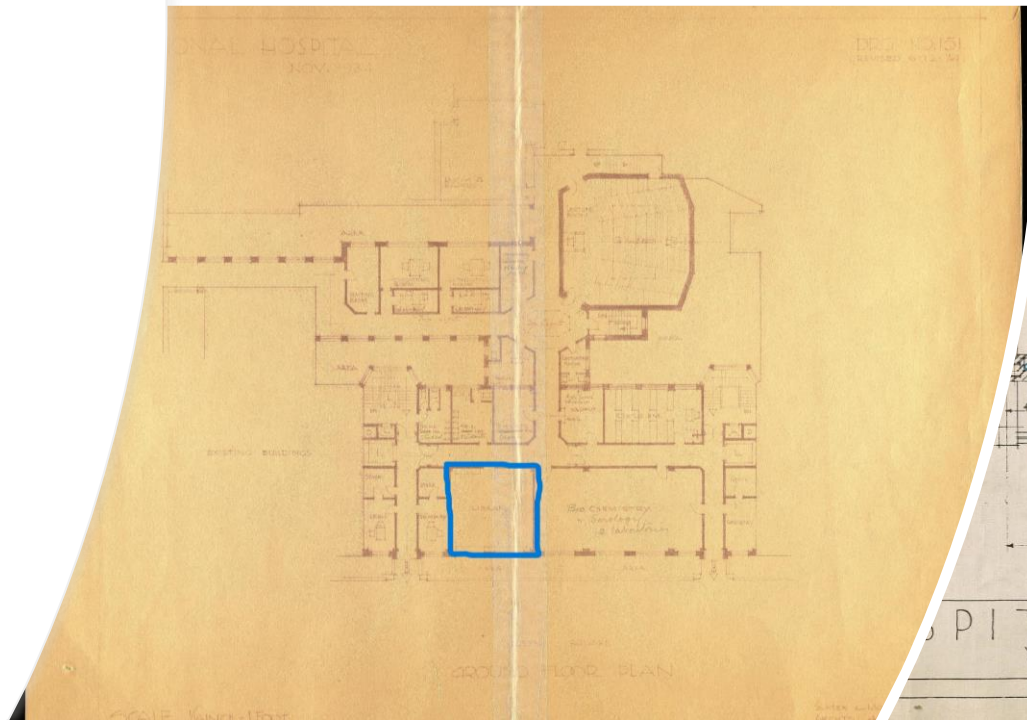
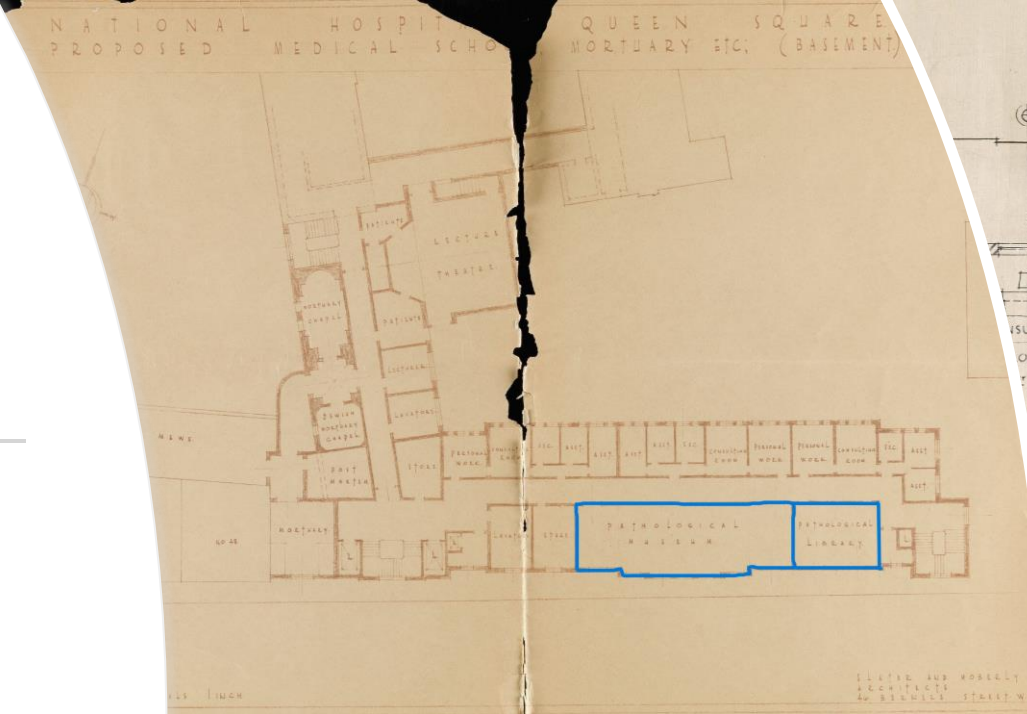
The thanks of the Hospital are due to Dr. Bastian and to Sir William Gowers for various books and pamphlets which they have presented to the Medical Library.

1888

- Top left: Gowers' proposal to create a Medical Library
- Top right: The Medical Committee endorse his idea
- Bottom centre: early donations to the Library, 1904

Earliest Library Locations

- Top left: Feb. 1934, Pathological Library & Museum, National Hospital (NH) basement
- Bottom left: Nov. 1934, Medical Library, NH ground floor plan
- Right: May 1938, Medical Library, NH ground floor plan



Historical Case Notes

Medical secretary typing up notes, 1935.

First known photo of the case notes – on lowest bookshelf [QSA/12412]

By 1936, the Library collection:

“contains a remarkable number of neurological works for a hospital of this size and is of considerable service to the large number of postgraduates who attend the hospital.”



1950s

The 1950s marked a foundational decade for the Institute of Neurology and its library.

In 1950, the Institute was established, and shortly after, on **18 October 1950**, the Library Sub-Committee was created under the leadership of Dr. Macdonald Critchley, with its first agenda focusing on acquiring books and periodicals.

Early milestones included appointing **P.M. Clarke as the first Medical Librarian** earning a salary of £400 per year (about £16,000 today), a new Library budget of £750 (~£32,000), and introducing services like book recommendations and interlibrary loans.

It was hoped that the Library would have the use of a **Kodak AH Type II Microfilm Reader** but the idea was shelved.

In **1954**, the library was renamed the **Rockefeller Medical Library** in recognition of funding from the Rockefeller Foundation to the National Hospital.

The late 1950s saw further innovations, including the introduction of **bookplates, borrowing procedures, entry card systems, library rules and guides**, and the librarian's inclusion in the Library Sub-Committee for the first time.

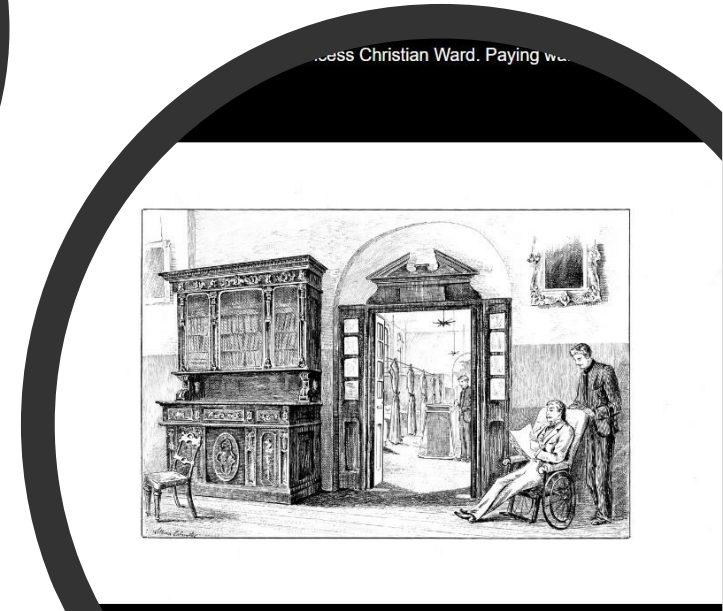
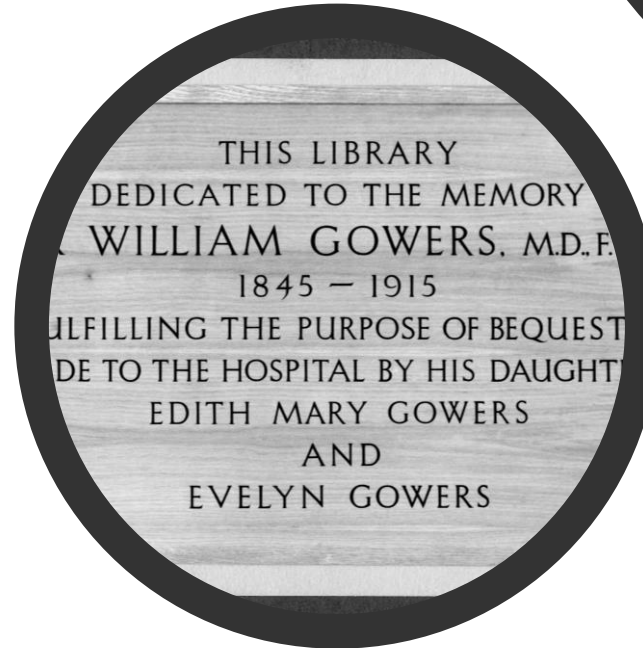
Additionally, **photocopying services** became available but only at The Royal Society of Medicine, and the Maida Vale Hospital students' library was first mentioned.

Patients' Library (Gowers Library)

The patients' library existed from 1866 until 2009 at the National Hospital or nearby locations. Donations of books, magazines and records were distributed on the wards.

In 1951, it became known as the Gowers Library, with an esteemed launch event due to a generous bequest from Gowers' daughters.

Images clockwise from top left:
Gowers Librarian on the ward (1998/99); library in use (1954); Princess Christian Ward and a full bookcase (1900); commemorative plaque (1951); Matron Ling, Ernest Gowers and Holmes at the launch event (1951).



1960s

The 1960s saw major progress for the Rockefeller Medical Library.

1960 marked the National Hospital's centenary with exhibitions and plans to relocate the library. By 1962/63, the Library moved to 17/19 Alexandra House in Queen Square.

Other key developments included:

- introduction of photocopying
- appointment of **Beryl Bailey** as Medical Librarian
- creation of roles like Honorary Medical Librarian (Dr. Hunter) and Honorary Consultant Librarian (Liam Payne, RCP)
- a library student was on placement here for the first time
- **Induction talks** and **MEDLARS** trials were introduced, alongside the first **reading list** and a ban on eating in the library

A Wellcome Trust grant in 1969 enabled the indexing of historical reports.



Left: Beryl Bailey, longest serving Medical Librarian and member of library staff 1965 – 1993 (over 27 years)

Centre: the Library's new home at 17/19 Alexandra House, Queen Square [QSA/15231]

Below: Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, in the Medical Library speaking at the opening of Alexandra House [QSA/1697]



1970s

The 1970s brought notable **international and local collaborations**:

- book loans to libraries in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania.
- In 1972, the Library gifted Gowers' *The Border-land of Epilepsy* to the University of Colorado in memory of Professor James Stephens, who had worked with Dr. Purdon Martin at the National Hospital.
- international visits from medical librarians

Other highlights included:

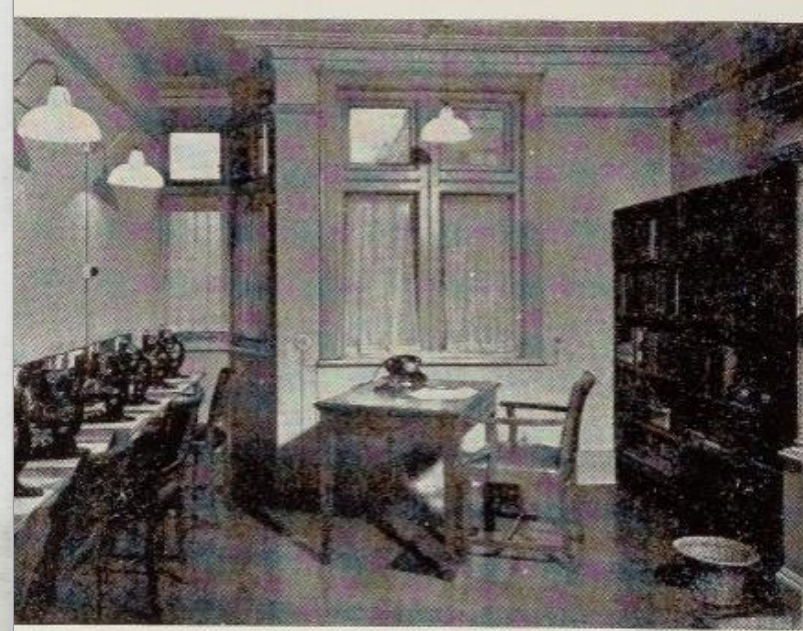
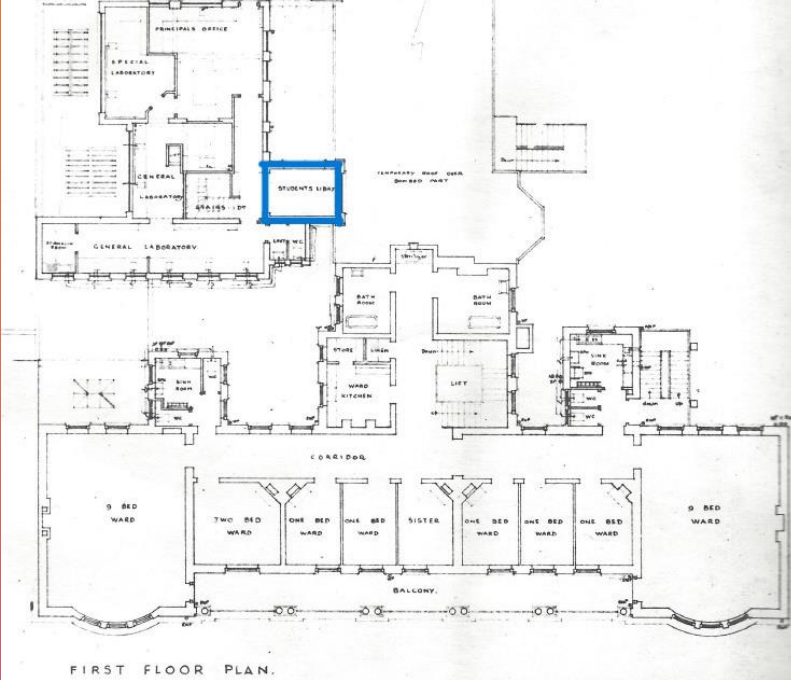
- the **end of the Honorary Consultant Librarian role** after Liam Payne's retirement.
- first **copyright notice**
- creation of a **Drug Information Service** in 1973
- integration of the **National College of Speech Sciences Librarian** into the library staff.
- completion of **historical collection cataloguing**
- discussions about library space pressures and potential relocation. By 1979, negotiations began re **exploring the purchase of 23 Queen Square** to address growing needs.

Library at Maida Vale Hospital for Nervous Diseases

The Library at MVH existed from at least the 1950s until 1992 when it merged with the Rockefeller Medical Library.

Clockwise from top left:

- Students' Library, first floor, 1950s plan – next to the bombed area
- Demonstration Room and Library (c.1950s)
- Library in use, 1970s
- Ambulance at Powis Place turntable – transporting patients, staff and journals between MVH and Queen Square



Demonstration Room and Library, Maida Vale Hospital



1980s

The 1980s saw significant developments at the Library. Firstly, in 1981, it moved to **23 Queen Square**, and in 1982, the introduction of a diploma course led to a sharp rise in usage.

The Library also embraced technology, connecting to the **University's academic computer network** in 1983 and launching **computer-aided literature searches** in 1984.

This decade saw collaboration expand, with **Audio-Visual Services and Maida Vale Hospital** joining the Medical Library Sub-Committee, creating a resource for cine, slides, and videos.

By 1985, half of the Library's users were from the **NHS**.

In 1986, the **ION contributed £2.5m** to fund the new **University Integrated Library Computer System (UILCS)**. Further innovations included:

- acquiring the **Medline database on CD-ROM** in 1987 with support from **Dr. Willison**.
- a **£15,000 bequest from Dr. Kremer** was used to purchase CD-ROM hardware and shelving
- the Library co-founded **MISER**, a free interlending service for medical libraries.
- **smoking was banned** in the Library.

The decade closed with the **Medline CD-ROM** becoming a popular tool in 1989. Additionally, the **Library Assistant role** was made permanent for the first time, with **Abdul Jhavary** serving in this position from **1980 to 2001**.

Archive on Film

<https://queenssquare.org.uk/archives/interesting/film-footage>



1985

Dr. Andrew Lees reviews the old surgical films to decide which films should be kept for archival purposes.



1986

A catalogue of cine films relating to Queen Square, the National Hospital and neurology is published.



1988

Archive images are used in the short film 'Queen Square: A Mike Dineen-Bedford Productions Film for the National Hospital Development Foundation'.



1990

Wellcome Trust Film Library established. "The 'cream' of the Institute's collection" is held there. ION retained copyright.



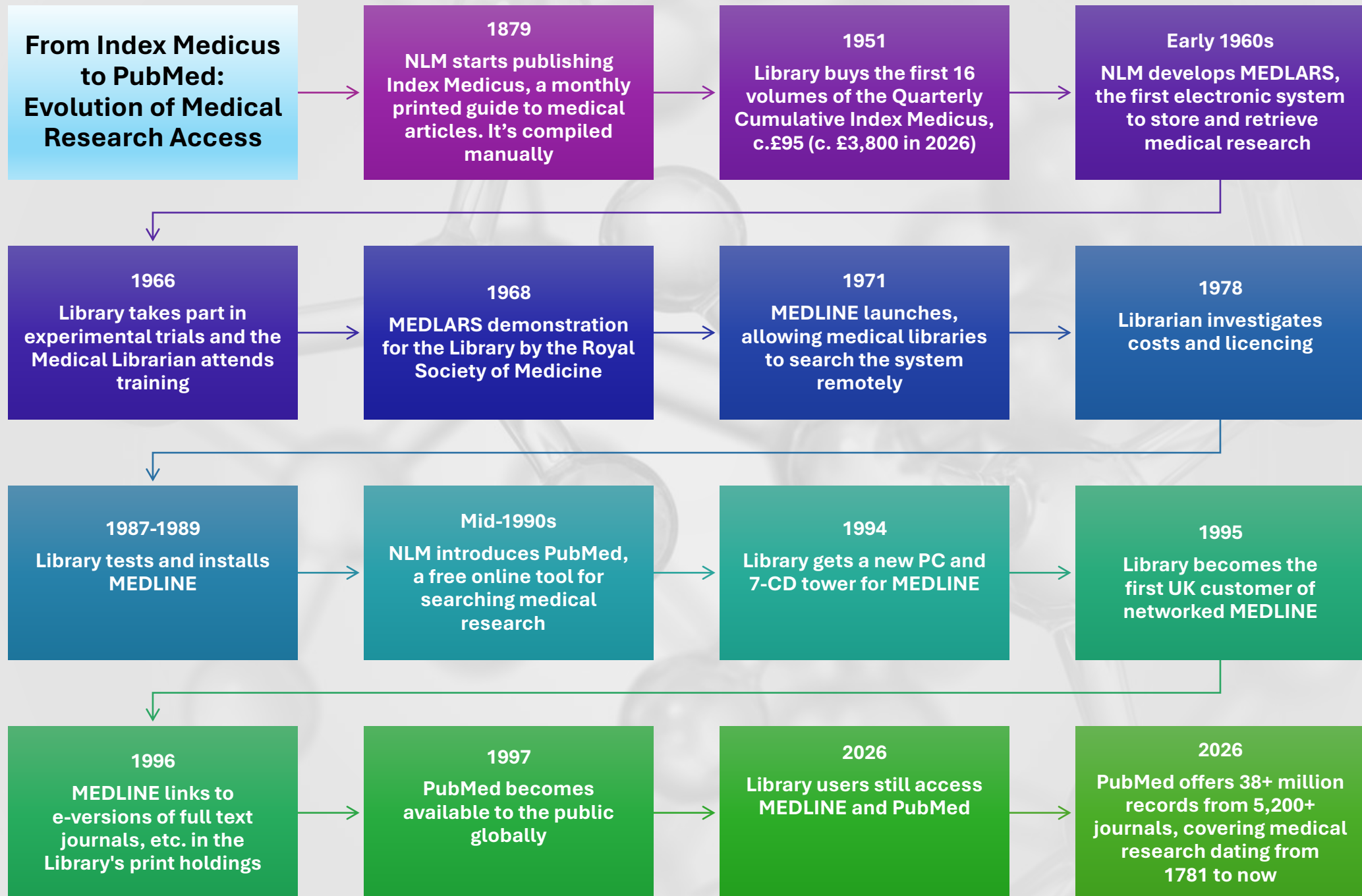
2019

We host filming/ radio shows which showcase our Archives, including '*D for diagnosis*', broadcast on Radio 4 in July.



2026

The Library hosts filming, and the Archive supplies images for the ION 75th anniversary video.



1990s

The 1990s brought closure to two associated libraries, and a new global audience via the internet.

The decade introduced the first Archivist in 1991 (albeit on a fixed term appointment paid for out of a grant from Wellcome Trust). It also saw the **Maida Vale Hospital Library close in 1992**, with its collection integrated with the Rockefeller Medical Library's, or sold in aid of fundraising.

In 1993, the **Nurse Education Library** merged with the Rockefeller Medical Library, **Beryl Bailey retired** after 27 years, and **Louise Shepherd became the new Head of the Library**. Costs were split 50:50 between ION and the National Hospital, and a barcode-scanning lightpen was introduced to scan barcodes as part of book loaning services.

Modernisation continued in 1994 with **email, WordPerfect, and a major refurbishment**. In 1995, the Library became the **first UK user of Networked Medline**, upgraded its Online Information Service, and **Samantha Duerden became the first Deputy Librarian**.

The internet era began in 1996 with the **Library's first webpage** and trials of ejournals.

A bust of Hughlings Jackson was installed, and the QS History Collection book cataloguing the historical resources was published in 1997.

By 1998, the Library reached 1,500 registered users.

2000s

The 2000s began with **Kate Brunskill** appointed as **Deputy Librarian** in 2000.

Challenging negotiations for a **library merger with UCL** took centre stage in 2000.

In 2001, the sale of duplicate stock raised **£11,000 for book conservation**.

In 2002, **NHS Trust computers** were introduced in the Library.

The **91% uniqueness of the 20th-century book collection** earned the Library flagship status, which it has retained ever since.

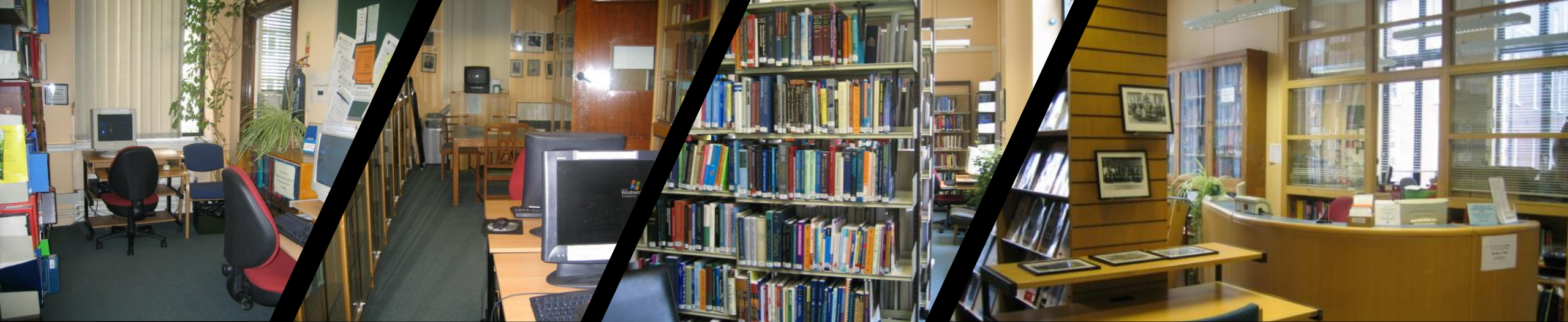
The **Library store was refurbished** with a new roof, air conditioning, and rolling racks.

The **first LibInfo Bulletin** was launched in 2003, updating users on the latest services and training.

In 2006, the Library received a **rating of '2' (out of 3) for services** and installed **UCL's RoamNet wireless access**.

In 2007, the **NeuroInfo blog** was created, and in 2008, a sponsored walk, "*The Lovely Ladies of the Library*," raised funds for the **Brain Tumour Unit**. A "**lost**" **revision of a medical manual** was also rediscovered in the archives.

By 2009, plans were underway for the **Library's complete redesign and refurbishment**.



2009/10: Before, During and After

(see also next page)





2010s

The 2010s began with a **£1 million redesign and refurbishment** in 2010, renaming the Library to **Queen Square Library, Archive and Museum** (later dropping “Museum”).

In 2011, **Wellcome funding** was secured for archives, and the **Queen Square Archives Committee** held its first meeting.

Louise Shepherd, Head of Queen Square Library (QSL), retired in 2012, and **Sarah Lawson** was appointed as her successor in 2013. That year, the Library was **shortlisted for a SCONUL Library design award** and launched its **Twitter account**.

In 2014, QSL earned a **Silver UCL Green Impact award**.

In 2015, the archive ‘pod’ was renamed **The Louise Shepherd Room** in her memory.

QSL introduced **self-service** in 2016 and hosted the “*Embroidered Minds*” exhibition.

In 2018, ‘**Queen Square: the History of the National Hospital and its Institute of Neurology**’ was published, with the launch event hosted by QSL.

Filming for a **BBC2 program on shell shock** took place.

The **Library Committee was reinstated** the same year.

2020s

The 2020s began with the **COVID-19 pandemic**, forcing the Library to close, but maintaining services remotely. It reopened, when possible, only with pre-booked study spaces. UCL launched the **Click and Collect service**, and Library staff contributed to **online guides and training materials**.

In 2021, a **virtual library tour** was created.

For the first time, **UCL library membership cards** became printable from Queen Square Library.

The **LibCal** booking system and **LibAnswers enquiry service** were introduced, along with a **UCL-wide online chat service**. The Library Skills Team, including Kate Brunskill, received the UCL Provost Education Award for their pandemic response.

The Library organised the “Shell Shock Beyond the War – A European Perspective” symposium in 2022.

Urszula Skiba joined the team as an Information Assistant in 2023.

In 2024, the **UCL Scan and Send service** was implemented, and the Library supported the **ION’s first undergraduate course, BSc Human Neuroscience**.

Carl Banks joined the team as an Information Assistant in 2025, and the **BlueSky account** replaced Twitter/X.

In 2026, QSL hosted filming and provided archives for **UCL200 and ION75 anniversary celebrations**, including a **display of QSLA’s history**.

Professor Shorvon’s new book on the ION’s history is set to be published in 2027.

received a Click and Collect confirmation



You must wear a face covering and show your UCL Library ID and booking/click and collect confirmation

Please phone Queen Square

2010s - Some Highlights

- 2010 £1 million redesign, refurb and rename of the Library and Archives: Queen Square Library, Archive and Museum. 'Museum' was later dropped.
 - 2011 Wellcome funding for Archives and launch of QSA website
- Queen Square Archives Committee first

This week we'll be busy with induction tours for new students

Library

Apologies in advance for any disruption.

Tue 22 Sept
13:00-16:00

Wed 23 Sept

