Audio-visual collection
The audio-visual collection charts the development of biochemistry in the 20th Century through extended interviews with some of its most celebrated practitioners. It consists of some 100 hours of videotape material (34 colour films), together with some 60 audio tapes dating from the 1950s (over half of which have already been transferred to CD-ROM).

The complete set of videotape interviews has been put online by the British Universities Film and Video Council (BUFVC; visit www.bufvc.ac.uk/maas/index.html and click on www.emol.ac.uk) in an easily searchable format, where it is freely available to members of subscribing institutions (mainly universities in the UK). Detailed metadata (which I had checked for scientific accuracy) accompany each interview, providing a valuable additional resource.

Time-coded VHS copies of all the interviews (also prepared by the BUFVC) have been transferred to the Biochemical Society archives at the University of London Repository, Egham, where they are available for viewing on site. Copies for sale (or loan) are available on request.

I have also overseen the transcription of a substantial proportion of the older items in our audiotape collection (going back to the 1950s) on to CDs and am in the process of completing this exercise with the remaining material (some 30 tapes) by arrangement with the Audio-Visual Centre, Royal Holloway University of London.

Cataloguing the archives
In my previous reports (see The Biochemist, August 2004), I indicated that, in addition to completing the project of digitizing oral history records, my priority for 2005 was to raise additional external funds to prepare a professional, web-browsable catalogue (‘finding aids’). This is a key element in my strategy to manage and to enhance access to the valuable research resources contained within the Biochemical Society archive as a whole, including the collections of hard-copy material. To this end, an application for funding was recently made to the Wellcome Trust Research Resources in Medical History Programme.

New acquisitions
In May 2005, I was delighted to collect from Dr Fred Sanger the complete set of his 36 laboratory notebooks (1945–1982), which he kindly donated to the Biochemical Society archives! Miguel Garcia-Sancho, a young science historian (based at Imperial College London) with expertise in this area, is now examining the notebooks and preparing an annotated catalogue briefly describing the contents of the notebooks.

In addition, several boxes of Biochemical Society administrative documents (including the earliest records of the Society), together with a number of framed pictures of paintings and photographs held at the Society’s previous offices at Portland Place were transferred to the archives at Egham during the summer of 2005.

Over the past year, I have continued to respond to a steady flow of requests for information about the history of the Society, and for material from the archives, from both individual researchers and institutions. This task will be greatly facilitated once a detailed catalogue has been prepared and made available online!

In April 2005, I was invited to make a short presentation on the oral records in our collection at a meeting, convened by the British Library which gathered some 30 participants to assess and evaluate existing collections and to explore ways of avoiding duplication of effort, and so on.

It was a great pleasure and privilege to interview Dr Fred Sanger last summer and to contribute this and occasional historical vignettes for The Biochemist.

Future plans
I hope to present a small exhibit about the archives, including a compilation of videotape interviews and hard copy material at the BioScience2006 meeting in Glasgow.

As suggested by the Executive Committee at its December 2005 meeting, I intend to set up a small ‘steering group’ to advise on future developments concerning the archive, including the preparation of small themed exhibits to coincide with Biochemical Society meetings.

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the Society who have generously supported my work over the last year, most particularly Jean Thomas and Chris Kirk. Thanks also to Murray Weston and his colleagues at the BUFVC for the excellent job in preparing the videotape interviews for access online.