May 6, 1963

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
716 Alvarado Row
Stanford, California

Re: NLM

Dear Josh:

This will follow up the telephone conversation we had in which you asked me whether I would be interested in being the director of the National Library of Medicine. I have given this quite a bit of thought and here is the substance of my thinking.

There is no doubt that the right man would have already made the National Library of Medicine the national biomedical information center; if not the international biomedical information center. If a sufficiently aggressive person is found for the job, there is no doubt that the NLM will become a strong competitor to ISI. On the other hand, if the new director is not hostile to free enterprise, he may elect to utilize our experience in this field. Because of the MEDLARS Project, General Electric has its foot in the door.

There is no doubt that up to a few years ago, I would have been delighted to take over this job. Even now I can say that there is a certain amount of anguish in turning down the opportunity for consideration. However, aside from other important reasons, including the fact that this job involves a great deal of politicking and diplomatic activity, for which I am supremely qualified, there is the practical financial considerations. After so many years of scrounging I can't ask my family to go back to that way of life. In addition, I have some very significant financial responsibilities including the support of my mother and step-father since he recently had a second heart attack.

To sacrifice all that has gone into the Institute for Scientific Information at this point, I believe, would not even be in the best interests of the general objective of improved biomedical information services. Indeed, my more recent contact with NIH and other government people convinces me that private financing is the best way out. While I am still in favor of the government doing something about the scientific information problem, I do believe its active participation will ultimately restrict freedom of information. After all, ASTIA started out with the best of intentions, but the net effect was to deny true freedom to the scientific investigator.

I think the kind of Institute for Scientific Information we have been thinking about lately, backed up by a kitty of 5/10 million dollars, can do a better job than a government center in Washington with a 100 million dollar budget, (an order of magnitude).

However, in viewing how I can best serve the general objective of advancing medical research, I would say that there is a far greater need for information scientists of high caliber. I think I could help train several hundred such people during the next decade. We will need these people to help you and others follow up "all those wonderful leads" generated by the citation index. For this

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reason, I think I can serve ISI better and the scientific community better if I obtain a university affiliation. In fact, I think I could manage to put in a fairly heavy teaching schedule as, for example, six hours per week, and still keep ISI in the right direction. I also think that my contacts with the students would help ISI find the needed personnel to handle its expanded operations in the future. So if you would like to recommend me for some type of position, then the most practical approach, I believe, is a job as professor of medical or scientific communication. While the University of Pennsylvania is not the best place in the world, it is not the worst. There is an Annenberg School of Communication, in addition to the Moore School of Electrical Engineering which has its computer and information sciences curriculum. The Moore School people have asked me to give a course on information retrieval but I don't feel at home with this group. The new Dean of the Medical School at Penn is a biochemist, Dr. Gurin. Do you think Koprowski or someone else you know at the University might make the appropriate suggestion to the Dean of the Medical School? I noticed in the latest Journal of Medical Education, which is devoted entirely to medical communication, that the precedent has already been established at the University of Kansas Medical School for the appointment of a Department of Medical Communication. Perhaps if I could get a biomedical information program going at Penn, we could carry it on even further in a few years at Stanford. Certainly I could be on the look out for good people if you were in a hurry. Have the Stanford people given any thought to this lately? Since there are five medical schools in Philadelphia, this is a very important spot to start with.

I probably could set up a Master's Degree program at the Drexel Institute of Technology, which already has a program in biomedical instrumentation whose chairman is Dr. Thorner, a man with an M.D. and Ph.D. Drexel seems to be headed in the right direction but for the time being still has a highly undergraduate flavor, and I would rather be associated with people actively in medical research.

Actually, I spoke to the President at the University, Waglord Harnwell, many years ago about the need for an information science curriculum. He has been serving on the Science Information Council of the NSF but I have had absolutely no contact with him. It is possible that other people at the University of Penn Medical School might feel they were more logical contenders for a post in biomedical information processing. There are a few people working with Britton Chance who are active users of the Computer Center. However, I believe their work is still highly oriented to the specific problems in their biophysical research program.

I'll be interested in your reactions to these comments.

Sincerely yours,

Eugene Garfield
Director

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