

"patented files" (case files showing Patent Office consideration of successful patent applications . . .). These are the records regarding which Dr. Ferguson raises questions. It must be borne in mind that these records, from 1836 to the present, come to about 50,000 cubic feet of files. The arrangement finally accepted envisaged a selective retention of patented files, based on professional judgment as to what categories of inventions were of prime importance to scholars in the field of patent, technological, and economic history.

Immediately after we approved the plan we began a canvass of experts and professional organizations for advice on a method of selection. Some failed to reply to our letters, others replied that they could offer no help, and a few sent lists of significant patents. We have been in touch with Dr. Ferguson's agency, the Smithsonian Institution, in this matter. Before we asked the Smithsonian Institution for advice, we had received only two suggestions for dealing with the file as a whole. Professor A. A. Potter, Dean Emeritus of Engineering, Purdue University, recommended that certain classes of inventions—the fields of communication, transportation, mechanized agriculture, metallurgy, and other significant technologies—should be retained. This approach is still under study. The

other suggestion came from the University of Pittsburgh. It proposed that we lend the University all patented files 1901-05 for an intensive study that would result in a series of monographs on technological history and a comprehensive list of important files. Had this proposal been carried out, it might have established a pattern for dealing with the entire body of records. Unfortunately the University found that it was unable to accept the records because of the cost involved in using such a large body of material.

We are still studying the question of how best to make a selection of patented files, including even the possibility of total retention. In the meantime we are planning to accession a large part of the early interference files, which contain significant information about the process of invention and the utilization of new devices. Such information does not often appear in the patented files. Your readers are invited to make use of the more than 6,000 cubic feet of patented files, 1836 to 1900, now in the National Archives.

Yours very truly,

MEYER H. FISHBEIN  
Archivist in Charge  
Business Economics Branch  
National Archives and  
Records Service

## Copyright Studies

THE PROGRESS OF THE PROGRAM OF STUDIES\* undertaken by the Copyright Office, Library of Congress, to examine the present United States copyright law

and intended to produce recommendations for a general revision of that law is reported in the *Annual Report of the Register of Copyrights for the*

\*See p. 554 *supra*.