

MC-MBL-Loewi/Sci, AC 2004-15

**Marine Biological Laboratory
Archives**

**Otto Loewi
1873-1961**

Manuscript Collection MBL2001-2
(One 17.5" x 8.5" x3.5" box)

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October 4, 2001

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BIOGRAPHY

Otto Loewi was born in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, in 1873. He received his MD in 1896 from the University of Strasbourg. He was professor of pharmacology at the University of Graz from 1909-1938 and received the **Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine in 1936**. The prize shared with Sir Henry Hallett Dale, was for his contribution to the knowledge of chemical transmission of nerve impulses.

Loewi received his early training in the German gymnasium where he did poorly in science and mathematics. In 1895, he discovered the bactericidal properties of formaldehyde.

Although first trained as a physician, he specialized in pharmacology because, as he stated, it was the science whose main goal was revealing physiologic function by the reactions of living matter to chemical agents. The very concept of using drugs in the study of function was most appealing to Loewi.

His researches from 1921-1926 provided the first proof that chemicals elaborated by the nerves were involved in the transmission of impulses from one nerve cell to another and from neurons to the responsive organ. A crucial experiment was one he performed in 1921 when he observed that fluid, transferred from one test tube containing a frog heart whose beat had been inhibited by vagal stimulation to a tube containing a second, unstimulated heart, similarly inhibited the beat of the second heart. The essential substance in the fluid was acetylcholine. The idea originally occurred to Loewi in 1903, but he dropped it until 1920 when he dreamed of the experiment using frogs, which he performed and which proved his theory.

Dr. Loewi emigrated from Austria to the United States in 1940 and became research professor of pharmacology at New York University, New York. He became a citizen in 1946.

PROVENANCE

In January 2001, Ms. Ruth Bolliger, Dr. Loewi's granddaughter, contacted the Library to inquire if we would be interested in receiving a bust of Dr. Loewi for our collection, as he had worked at the MBK for 17 summers. We were very happy to have the bust, made by his dentist, as well as two academic hoods, which were sent to us, and in October, 2001. Ms. Bolliger, her sister and brother-in-law, visited to see the bust displayed in the Agassiz Room. At that time they gave us additional photographs, newspaper articles and other memorabilia.

ARRANGEMENT

The bust of Otto Loewi is displayed in the Agassiz Room. The hoods and other items we have are in one box.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection consists of one bronze bust and one 17" x 11.5" x 3" box.

RELATED COLLECTIONS

There is a file in the Biographical Cabinet on Otto Loewi.

FOLDER LIST

Folder	Contents	Dates
1	Control folder: Letters re acquisition, biographical information,	1873-1961
2	Newspaper articles, reprints, 1944 NYU Commencement program, Information from Fred Lembeck and Wolfgang Giere's biography of Loewi	1944-1968

3	Photographs	
4	Academic hoods	