



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

Washington D.C.

Private

Nov. 4. 87.

Dear Dr Gray.

I have delayed acknowledging your letter till I could state the fact, of the Call of the Regents, which you suggested. The official notice is enclosed, and with it, an answer to your official letter, concerning the Wesley package. I hope the plan suggested will spare you trouble.

I communicated your views on the Fish Commission to Mr Goode. When I got back I found that he had got a copy of Mr Rhees pamphlet, I sent him, and had conceived the misapprehension that I approved it as a whole. He perhaps might do so. I have thought it best to retain the whole edition (250 Copies) for the present, from Circulation.

Only two Copies are out, yours, and one in the hands of Dr Willing.

Mr Goode (under the mistake just alluded to) had prepared, I found, a letter to me, in which he expressed very clearly and convincingly the view that the actual Museum of today was not.

the Museum of which you wrote, or from which
Professor Henry apprehended troubling complica-
tions . . . and that M^r. Rhees, ~~by~~ using
the same word. "Museum" for the subject
of his indicated policy, as. ~~for~~ that which
he cited in the past, was (doubtless unin-
tentionally) committing those he quoted, to the
apparent position that the same action should
be taken, under conditions really different.

"Words, govern things", so much,
that it seemed to me not superfluous to
state this, and at the same time to
add that both Mr Goode and I, as
Officers of the Smithsonian, feel that our
first duty is to secure and maintain its
autonomy and independence, so that it can-
not be weighed down by the Museum or
any related interests. This premised, we feel
that it can hardly do better for the "increase
and diffusion of knowledge among men" than
by directing the affairs of the Actual Museum
so that it shall not be the possible "Cabinet
of Curiosities" under "inactive Curator" Prof
Henry decided, but tend in its conduct to
the ideal he himself held in the time of his
most vigorous thought. I meant to have enclosed
Mr. Ford's letter, but he wishes to make a copy,
embodying some considerations as to carrying
out suggestions made by your former Committee,
so, I have asked him to forward it by another mail.

Most truly Yours
S. P. Langley



Langley, S. P. 1887. "Langley, Samuel P. Nov. 4, 1887." *Asa Gray correspondence*

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