

New archival collection: Ralph S. Paffenbarger papers

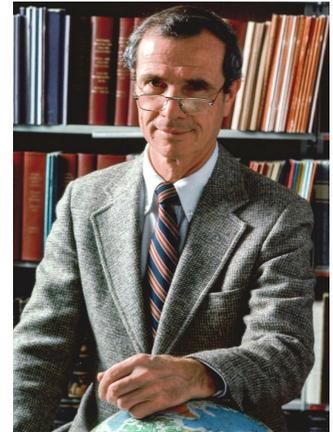
Now available in the library: the Ralph S. Paffenbarger, Jr., papers

In October 2024, Galter Library Special Collections received a remarkable gift from JoAnn Schroeder Paffenbarger: the papers of her late husband, Ralph S. Paffenbarger, Jr., MD, DPH, a Feinberg alumnus and pioneering epidemiologist. Paffenbarger conducted a range of groundbreaking research in epidemiology, but is most well-known for the Harvard alumni study which helped shape modern public health recommendations, such as getting in 10,000 steps a day. Taking his own research to heart, he laced up his running shoes at age 45 and continued running well into his 80s, completing over 150 marathons and 5 ultramarathons.

The collection, which includes materials from Paffenbarger's personal and professional life, is now fully processed and open to researchers. Among the many donated treasures are data from his pivotal studies, medals and patches from races around the world, and the inaugural Olympic Prize for Sports Medicine, which Paffenbarger received in 1996 in recognition of his life's work. [Learn more and explore the collection here.](#)

Thanks to JoAnn Schroeder Paffenbarger's generosity, the donation also included a financial gift to support the preservation and accessibility of these materials for future researchers.

If you are interested in seeing the Paffenbarger collection, reach out to gsl-specialcollections@northwestern.edu to schedule an appointment.



Printed: Friday, February 20, 2026 12:24 PM

Source: <https://galter.northwestern.edu/News/ralph-paffenbarger-papers.pdf>