

American publishing, printing, and book-related ephemera collection

Ms. Coll. 1411

Finding aid prepared by Kelly Tuttle.

Last updated on April 03, 2020.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2019 August 13

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	3
Scope and Contents.....	4
Administrative Information.....	5
Related Materials	5
Controlled Access Headings.....	5
Collection Inventory.....	7
Series I. Book of the Month Club.....	7
Series II. Advertisements.....	7
Series III. Book catalogs and lists.....	8
Series IV. Financial and business records.....	8

Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Title	American publishing, printing, and book-related ephemera collection
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1411
Date [bulk]	1852-1961
Date [inclusive]	1827-1961
Extent	0.4 linear foot (1 box)
Language	English
Abstract	This is a collection of Book-of-the-Month club news, mailings, and offers along with a few examples of other book-seller related materials such as advertisements, catalogs, lists, and financial and business documents, mostly receipts. The bulk of the collection is from the years 1850 to 1961 with a few outlying documents from the 1820s to 1840s.

Cite as:

American publishing, printing, and book-related ephemera collection, 1827-1961 (bulk: 1852-1961), Ms. Coll. 1411, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Since the establishment of the American colonies, reading and education was an important aspect of culture for many; however only in 1918, was education made compulsory across the nation. As a result, the rate of illiteracy has decreased dramatically, and reading habits have changed enormously. During the early years of this country and even today, "reading has been a synonym for the reception and diffusion of ideas," (Hall) resulting in early reading taking place in the homes of intellectuals and for learned purposes, rather than for leisure and pleasure. With improved technology in the 19th and 20th centuries, the cost of producing printed matter decreased, which combined with a rise in both literacy and income, resulted in a greatly increased demand for reading material and "the emergence of 'mass' culture," (Hall). Advertising and book clubs flourished, particularly through mass mailings, which provided households with easy access to new reading materials. One such club was the Book-of-the-Month Club.

The Book-of-the-Month is a subscription-based club that offers its members their choice of a book each month with alternates and book-dividend swaps available. Harry Scherman, Max Sackheim, and Robert Haas founded the club in 1926. The club was acquired by Time, Inc. in 1977 and has changed hands several times since then. When the club operated as a mail-order service, members were shipped the monthly selection on a particular date if the selection had not been declined before that date. No response was seen as acceptance of the selection. The club began with about 4000 members and grew to over 550,000 members in the following 20 years, which is the period that this collection chiefly covers.

Works cited:

Hall, David D. "Readers and Reading in America: Historical and Critical Perspectives." *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, pages 337-357.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists primarily of Book-of-the-Month club news, advertisements, mailings, and offers along with some examples of other book-seller related materials such as advertisements, catalogs and lists, and financial and business documents, mostly receipts. The bulk of the collection is from the years 1850 to 1961 with a few outlying documents from the 1820s to 1840s. The collection largely documents advertising efforts of book-sellers in the Mid-Atlantic in the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, with a few examples coming from the mid-western and the northeastern United States as well. It also documents some book pricing from that time period in the form of receipts. An incorporation document for the Philadelphia Democrat Publishing Company is also included.

The collection is arranged in four series. Series 1. Book-of-the-Month Club papers includes advertisements for free books, for special offers, for upcoming book selections, for book-dividend offers, club news, mass mailings, and four empty envelopes with printed labels. Series 2. Other book-market related advertisements is organized alphabetically by what is on offer, including a trade card for a paper mill. Series 3. Other book-seller catalogs and lists is organized alphabetically by publisher. Series 4. Financial and business documents includes an incorporation document, a subscription list, a brief Library of Congress memo related to copyright, and about a dozen receipts, no more than one from each company represented.

This collection will be of most use for researchers of Book-of-the-Month club recruiting and advertising activities.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2019 August 13

Finding aid prepared by Kelly Tuttle.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may exist. For most library holdings, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania do not hold copyright. It is the responsibility of the requester to seek permission from the holder of the copyright to reproduce material from the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Source of Acquisition

Sold by Ian Brabner Rare Americana, 2019.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

At the Library of Congress: Book-of-the-Month Club records, 1939-1967

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- Book-of-the-Month Club#.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Advertisements
- Book catalogs
- Business records
- Financial records

SUBJECT(S)

- Advertising
- Book industries and trade
- Publishers and publishing

Collection Inventory

SERIES I. BOOK OF THE MONTH CLUB.

	Box	Folder
Ads for free books for Club members, circa 1930s-1950s.	1	1
Ads for special offers, circa 1930s-1950s.	1	2
Ads for upcoming book selections, circa 1930s-1950s.	1	3
Book-Dividend offers, circa 1930s-1950s.	1	4
<i>Book of the Month Club News</i> , 1936-1944.	1	5
<i>Book of the Month Club News</i> and one <i>Supplement</i> for mid-summer, 1945-1956, undated.	1	6
Mass mailings for recruitment, circa 1930s-1950s.	1	7
Empty envelopes with three different Book of the Month Club labels, circa 1930s-1950s.	1	8

SERIES II. ADVERTISEMENTS.

	Box	Folder
<i>Another Chosen People: American Negroes</i> by Joseph E. Coleman and	1	9

Mary E. Walls-Luther Burbank-- *How Does He Do It?*, 1881-1961.

Magazine of Wall Street-- *The World's Work*, 1875-1937. 1 10

SERIES III. BOOK CATALOGS AND LISTS.

	Box	Folder
Brentano's - Hampshire Bookshop, 1925-1947, undated.	1	11
Junior Heritage Club - W.F. Quarry and Company, 1947-1953, undated.	1	12

SERIES IV. FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS RECORDS.

	Box	Folder
Articles of Incorporation for the Philadelphia Democrat Publishing Company, 1897.	1	13
Library of Congress, receipt of copyright matter, 1891.	1	14
Receipts, 1827-1828, 1852-1856, 1867.	1	15
Receipts, 1871-1889, 1902.	1	16
Subscription list for <i>Connecticut War Record</i> , circa 1861-1865.	1	14