



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Records, 1882-1969

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Records
Identifier:	Record Unit 206
Date:	1882-1969
Extent:	5 cu. ft. (5 record storage boxes)
Creator::	National Museum of History and Technology. Division of Graphic Arts and Photography
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 206, National Museum of History and Technology. Division of Graphic Arts and Photography, Records

Historical Note

In December 1882, George Brown Goode, the Assistant Director in charge of the United States National Museum (USNM), wrote to arts scholar Sylvester Rosa Koehler of Boston, requesting his assistance in creating a Graphic Arts collection for the Smithsonian Institution. Koehler agreed to collaborate with Goode, and together they laid out plans for such a collection over the next four years. When the Section of Graphic Arts was established in 1886, Koehler became its part-time Curator. The Section was under the Department of Arts and Industries, which reported to the Division of Anthropology in USNM. During this period Koehler collected numerous artifacts for the Section, developed a print collection that became a permanent exhibition at USNM, and published extensively in the arts field.

The Section of Graphic Arts began reporting to the Department of Anthropology when USNM was reorganized in 1897. After Koehler's death in 1900, the Graphic Arts collections were administered by the Smithsonian Library. In 1904, however, the Section was renamed the Division of Graphic Arts, which continued to submit reports to the Department of Anthropology. Paul Brockett was made Custodian of the Division that year, and later, in 1912, Ruel Pardee Tolman became his aide. When another reorganization of USNM occurred in 1920, the Division of Graphic Arts began reporting to the Department of Arts and Industries. Tolman was placed in charge of the Division as the Assistant Curator, and the following year Ralph Clifton Smith assumed the position as aide.

From 1924 to 1932, the Division of Graphic Arts reported to a merged Department of Arts and Industries and the Division of History. Tolman prepared monthly exhibitions at the Smithsonian Building during these years, which consisted of works largely solicited from living artists. One year after Tolman was promoted to Curator in 1932, the Division of Graphic Arts began submitting reports again to a re-established Department of Arts and Industries. In 1938, the Department of Arts and Industries was organized as the

Department of Engineering and Industries, which included the Division of Graphic Arts. Tolman hired Jacob Kainen as an aide in 1942, who became Curator of the Division when Tolman was reassigned as Director of the National Collection of Fine Arts in 1946.

When USNM was reorganized in 1957, the Division of Graphic Arts began reporting to a Department of Arts and Manufactures in the Museum of History and Technology (MHT). Prior to this reorganization, Kainen worked on developing the color printmaking collection and added more antique printing presses to the collections of prints and tools, with assistance from museum aides Eugene J. Fite and Fuller O. Griffith III. In 1960, Eugene N. Ostroff joined the Division as Associate Curator and eventually became Curator of the Division of Graphic Arts at Kainen's retirement in September 1966.

In 1969, MHT was organized as the National Museum of History and Technology, and the Division of Graphic Arts merged with the Section of Photography to become a Division of Graphic Arts and Photography, which reported to the Department of Applied Arts.

Research of the Division of Graphic Arts centered on the history of printing technology. The Division documented the techniques, materials, and equipment used in writing, drawing, line engraving, etching, photogravure, lithography, halftone printing, silk-screen stencil, papermaking, calligraphy, and bookbinding. The Division also prepared exhibitions of tools, heavy machinery, and supplies used in the printmaking process, most of which became part of the Hall of Graphic Arts.

Curators and staff of the Division included Sylvester Rosa Koehler, Curator, 1886-1900; Paul Brockett, Custodian, 1904-1920; Ruel P. Tolman, museum aide, 1912-1919, Assistant Curator, 1920-1931, Curator, 1932-1946; Ralph Clifton Smith, museum aide, 1921-1926; C. Allen Sherwin, museum aide, 1935-1937; Jacob Kainen, museum aide, 1942-1945, Curator, 1946-1966; Eugene J. Fite, museum aide, 1947-1950, Assistant Curator, 1951; Fuller O. Griffith III, museum aide, 1955-1957, Assistant Curator, 1958-1960, Associate Curator, 1961-1964; Peter Morse, Associate Curator, 1965-1967; Eugene N. Ostroff, Associate Curator, 1960-1966, Curator, 1966- ; and Elizabeth M. Harris, Assistant Curator, 1965- .

Descriptive Entry

These records consist of correspondence, accession lists, blueprints for the Hall of Graphic Arts, historical information about the Division, annual reports, staff lecture notes and papers, materials pertaining to The Printing Ink exhibition, biographies of important contributors in the field of printing technology, exhibition labels and photographs, correspondence logs, and newspaper clippings pertaining to activities of the Division.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Graphic arts
- Museum curators
- Museum exhibits
- Photography
- Women museum curators

Types of Materials:

Architectural drawings
Black-and-white photographs
Clippings
Floor plans
Illustrations
Manuscripts

Names:

Brockett, Paul, 1872-1946
Fite, Eugene J.
Goode, G. Brown (George Brown), 1851-1896
Griffith, Fuller
Harris, Elizabeth M.
Kainen, Jacob
Koehler, S. R. (Sylvester Rosa), 1837-1900
Morse, Peter
National Collection of Fine Arts (U.S.)
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.) Hall of Graphic Arts
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Department of Arts and Manufactures
Ostroff, Eugene
Sherwin, C. Allen
Smith, Ralph Clifton, 1898-
Smithsonian Institution. Libraries
The Printing Ink (Exhibition) (Washington, D.C.)
Tolman, Ruel P. (Ruel Pardee), 1878-1954
United States National Museum
United States National Museum. Department of Anthropology
United States National Museum. Department of Arts and Industries

Container Listing

Series 1: CORRESPONDENCE, 1903-1969.

Consists of a general alphabetic file of divisional correspondence for the years shown; but coverage of many years is thin or missing.

Box 1

Box 1 of 5 A-J

Box 2

Box 2 of 5 K-Slinger

Box 3

Box 3 of 5 Smalley's-Z

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Series 2: DIVISIONAL RECORDS, 1887-1962.

Consist of accession records, invoices, correspondence log for 1887, and other miscellaneous records.

Box 3

Box 3 of 5

Divisional Records, 1887-1962

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Series 3: ANNUAL REPORTS, 1882-1958.

Consist of reports submitted by curators to museum heads.

Box 3

Box 3 of 5 Annual Reports, 1882-1923

Box 4

Box 4 of 5 Annual Reports, 1923-1958

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Series 4: EXHIBIT RECORDS, 1914-1960.

Consist of plans, floor plans, labels, a few photographs relating to exhibits planned to illustrate the division's area of responsibility.

Box 4

Box 4 of 5

Exhibit Records, 1914-1960

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Series 5: LECTURES AND PUBLICITY, 1920-1937.

Consist of scripts of lectures prepared on various topics related to the graphic arts, and of public notices and newspaper clippings referring to the division's work.

Box 5

Box 5 of 5

Lectures and Publicity

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