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Records, 1956-1976

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Records
Identifier:	Record Unit 293
Date:	1956-1976
Extent:	3.5 cu. ft. (7 document boxes)
Creator::	National Museum of History and Technology. Division of Physical Sciences
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 293, National Museum of History and Technology. Division of Physical Sciences, Records

Historical Note

In 1890 a Section of Physical Apparatus was established in the Department of Arts and Industries with William Crawford Winlock as Honorary Curator. In 1897 the Section became the Mechanical Phases collection in the Division of Technology, curated by J. Elfreth Watkins.

In 1938 the Section of Physical Sciences and Measurement was created from the Section of Mechanical Technology of the Division of Engineering. Frank A. Taylor, Curator of Engineering, assumed curatorial responsibility for Physical Sciences and Measurement, serving in this capacity until 1955. His successor, Robert P. Multhauf, was Curator of the Section from 1955 to 1957.

In 1957 the Section of Physical Sciences and Measurement became the Division of Physical Sciences, Department of Science and Technology, in the Museum of History and Technology (MHT). Multhauf served as Curator of the Division until the position was assigned to Faye Cannon (prior to 1976, Walter F. Cannon) in 1965.

Research and collections of the Division of Physical Sciences principally focused on the history of astronomy, meteorology, chemistry, classical physics, geology, astrophysics, and mathematics. Curators and staff of the Division included Robert P. Multhauf, Curator of the Section of Physical Sciences and Measurement, 1955-1957, Curator of the Division of Physical Sciences, 1957-1965; Faye Cannon, Associate Curator, 1962-1964, Curator, 1965- ; Lester Clark Lewis, Curator, 1962; Uta C. Merzbach, Associate Curator, 1964-1967; Deborah J. (Mills) Warner, Assistant Curator, 1964-1966, 1968-1969, Associate Curator, 1970- ; and Jon B. Eklund, Assistant Curator, 1968-1969, Associate Curator, 1970- .

Descriptive Entry

These records consist of public inquiries about scientific instruments; layout plans, scripts, and photographs for exhibitions; proposals for the Hall of Physics, Mathematics, and Astronomy in MHT; general correspondence with domestic and foreign science museums, universities, manufacturers and collectors of scientific instruments, and professional societies; administrative files consisting of annual reports, staff memoranda, and planning statements; records documenting Cannon's role in the bicentennial celebration of James Smithson's birth; and information pertaining to internship research.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Mathematics -- History
- Museum curators
- Physical sciences -- History

Types of Materials:

- Black-and-white photographs
- Floor plans
- Manuscripts

Names:

- Cannon, Susan Faye, 1925-1981
- Eklund, Jon B.
- Lewis, Lester Clark
- Merzbach, Uta C., 1933-
- Multhauf, Robert P.
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Department of Science and Technology
- National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.). Hall of Physics, Mathematics, and Astronomy
- Smithson Bicentennial
- Taylor, Frank A. (Frank Augustus), 1903-2007
- United States National Museum. Department of Arts and Industries
- United States National Museum. Department of Engineering and Industries
- United States National Museum. Division of Engineering
- United States National Museum. Section of Physical Apparatus
- United States National Museum. Section of Physical Sciences and Measurement
- Warner, Deborah Jean
- Watkins, J. Elfreth (John Elfreth), 1852-1903
- Winlock, William Crawford

Container Listing

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Box 1 of 7	Memoranda from George Norton, 1968-1970, 1976
Box 1 of 7	Memoranda to and from Deborah J. Warner, 1967-1976 (2 folders)
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Box 1 of 7	Bridgman Apparatus, 1962-1968
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Box 1 of 7	Franklin Machines, 1964
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