



# Smithsonian Institution Archives

## Records, circa 1947-1982

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <a href="mailto:osiaref@si.edu">osiaref@si.edu</a>
<b>Title:</b>	Records
<b>Identifier:</b>	Record Unit 472
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1947-1982
<b>Extent:</b>	1.5 cu. ft. (1 record storage box) (1 document box)
<b>Creator::</b>	National Museum of American History. Division of Textiles
<b>Language:</b>	English

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 472, National Museum of American History.  
Division of Textiles, Records

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## Historical Note

The Smithsonian Institution established a Section of Foods and Textiles as a part of the United States National Museum (USNM) in 1883. Romyn Hitchcock, an experienced microscopist and chemist, was selected as Curator of Textiles and also acted as Assistant Curator along with Honorary Curator W. O. Atwater in the analysis of food products. Many of the textile specimens assigned to Hitchcock were acquired at the close of the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. The Section was renamed the Section of Textiles shortly before its demise in 1890. In 1912, the Division of Textiles was re-established, reporting to the Assistant Secretary in charge of USNM. Frederick L. Lewton became Curator of the Division. From 1916, Lewton was also responsible for medical collections, and between 1931 and 1938 the collections were administered jointly by a single Division of Textiles and Medicine. In the latter year textiles became a Section within the newly established Division of Crafts and Industries, of which Lewton served as Curator through 1946. Textiles was reestablished as a division in 1957 and was moved among many different departments until its affiliation with the Department of Social and Cultural History in 1981. For an account of these administrative changes, see the introduction to the Department of the History of Science and Technology, whose antecedent departments oversaw the Division prior to 1980.

The principal function of the Division of Textiles is to document the historical, cultural, and economic development of American textile fabrics, implements, and machinery since the seventeenth century. In addition to American technical progress in the production of textiles, work of the Division focused on the earliest methods of textile making throughout the world. Research interests of the Division and its predecessors included tapestry, weaving, household and costume textiles, woolen goods, silks, sewing threads, hand spinning-wheels, sewing machines, patent models, textile techniques from fiber to fabric, fiber identification, dyes, quilts, and other needlework. The Division staff also has developed exhibitions, presented lectures on the history of textile manufacturing, published catalogs, and collected and conserved objects.

Staff of the Division included Rita J. Adrosko, Associate Curator, 1963-1970, and Curator, 1971- ; Grace Rogers Cooper, Assistant Curator, 1949-1956, Associate Curator, 1957, and Curator, 1958-1976; Gary B. Kulik, Assistant Curator, 1979-1981, and Associate Curator, 1982; William N. Watkins, Curator, 1947-1957; Milton Eisler, Conservator, 1960-1963; Maureen Collins McHugh, Conservator, 1963-1970; Katherine Dirks, museum technician, 1971-1980, and Conservator, 1981- ; Doris M. Bowman, needlework and lace specialist, 1960- ; Lois Vann, museum specialist, 1961- ; and Barbara Suit Janssen, museum specialist, 1975- .

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## Descriptive Entry

For the most part, this record unit documents curatorial and staff activities of the Division of Textiles after the creation of the Museum of History and Technology in 1957; however, some records also date from the time the Division was a Section of the Division of Crafts and Industries in the United States National Museum.

These records consist of inquiries from private collectors, textile corporations, universities, and historical societies pertaining to collections of the Division; copies of curatorial responses to public inquiries; budgetary information; accession lists; correspondence referring to identification of textile specimens, their preservation needs, and tours of the Textile Hall; and curatorial reports.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Museum curators  
Textile fabrics  
Textile machinery

Names:

Adrosko, Rita J.  
Atwater, W. O. (Wilbur Olin), 1844-1907  
Bowman, Doris M.  
Centennial Exhibition (1876 : Philadelphia, Pa.)  
Cooper, Grace Rogers  
Dirks, Katherine  
Eisler, Milton  
Hitchcock, Romyne, 1851-1923  
Janssen, Barbara Suit  
Kulik, Gary  
Lewton, Frederick L. (Frederick Lewis), 1874-1959  
McHugh, Maureen Collins  
National Museum of American History (U.S.). Department of Social and Cultural History  
National Museum of American History (U.S.). Department of the History of Science and Technology  
National Museum of American History (U.S.). Textile Hall  
National Museum of History and Technology (U.S.)  
Smithsonian Institution. Assistant Secretary in charge of the United States National Museum  
United States National Museum. Division of Crafts and Industries  
United States National Museum. Division of Crafts and Industries

United States National Museum. Division of Textiles and Medicine  
United States National Museum. Section of Foods and Textiles  
United States National Museum. Section of Textiles  
Vann, Lois  
Watkins, William N.

## Container Listing

### Box 1

- Box 1 of 2 Correspondence, 1977
- Box 1 of 2 Correspondence, 1978 (3 folders)
- Box 1 of 2 Correspondence, 1979 (4 folders)
- Box 1 of 2 Correspondence, January-June 1980
- Box 1 of 2 Correspondence, July-December 1980
- Box 1 of 2 Correspondence, January-June 1981
- Box 1 of 2 Correspondence, July-December 1981
- Box 1 of 2 Correspondence, January-June 1982
- Box 1 of 2 Correspondence, July-December 1982

### Box 2

- Box 2 of 2 Annual Reports, 1947-1958
- Box 2 of 2 Annual Reports, 1960-1969
- Box 2 of 2 Budget, 1971
- Box 2 of 2 Budget, 1957-1964
- Box 2 of 2 Plan of Operation, 1970
- Box 2 of 2 Report on Record Holdings, 1952-1960