

Melbert B. Cary Jr. Graphic Arts Collection
Rochester Institute of Technology Libraries

CSC 039

JOSPEH BLUMENTHAL PAPERS

1921–1991

2.67 linear feet, 8 boxes

- Series I. Correspondence, 1963-1990
- Series II. Personal Papers, 1921-1991
- Series III. Writings and Exhibitions, 1953-1990

2011

Descriptive Summary**Repository**

Melbert B. Cary Jr. Graphic Arts Collection
Rochester Institute of Technology Libraries
90 Lomb Memorial Drive
Rochester, New York 14623

Call Number

CSC 039

Title

Joseph Blumenthal Papers

Inclusive Dates

1921-1991

Quantity

2.67 linear feet (8 boxes)

Language of Materials

Materials are in English and German.

Abstract

The Joseph Blumenthal Papers contain personal and professional correspondence, research files, photographs, and personal papers documenting the life and career of the American printer, printing historian, and type designer Joseph Blumenthal, and his wife Ann White Blumenthal. While the material does cover some aspects of Blumenthal's professional activities, there are no business or financial records present for the Spiral Press.

Administrative Information**Restrictions to Access**

The collection is open to researchers.

Acquisition Information

The Joseph Blumenthal Papers were the gift of the estate of Joseph and Ann Blumenthal, 1991.

Ownership and Copyright

The Joseph Blumenthal Papers is the physical property of the Melbert B. Cary Jr. Graphic Arts Collection, Rochester Institute of Technology Libraries. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns.

Processing Information

The collection was processed by Sandra Markham.

Preferred Citation

This collection should be cited as: [indicate specific item or series here], Joseph Blumenthal Papers (CSC 039), Melbert B. Cary Jr. Graphic Arts Collection, Rochester Institute of Technology Libraries.

Online Catalog Headings**Subject Names**

Blumenthal, Joseph, 1897-1990
Blumenthal, Ann White, 1901-1990
Bullen, Henry Lewis, 1857-1938.
Carter, Sebastian
Corbin, Harold, 1914-
Gaige, Crosby, 1882-1949
Garnett, Porter, 1871-1951
Heckscher, August, 1913-1997
Hiss, Alger
Johnson, Herbert H. (Herbert Harrison)
Macy, George
Morris, Henry, 1925-
Nacht, Robert
Newman, Arnold, 1918-2006
Rogers, Bruce, 1870-1957
Rollins, Carl Purington, 1880-1960
Stresow, Gustav
Taylor, W. Thomas
Turner, Hermine, 1880-1976
Spiral Press

Subject Topics

Graphic arts--United States--History
Printers--New York--New York--20th century
Public libraries--Connecticut--History

Document Types

Correspondence
Passports
Portrait photographs

Related Collections

The Spiral Press Collection of books and ephemera is at the Melbert B. Cary Jr. Graphic Arts Collection, Rochester Institute of Technology.

Biographical/Historical Notes

Joseph Blumenthal was born in New York, on October 4, 1897, the son of Samuel and Rose Hart Blumenthal. After attending Cornell University, he founded his Spiral Press in New York in 1926. Blumenthal specialized in producing limited editions of fine printing for publishers including museums and libraries, as well as for clients ranging from the poet Robert Frost to the commercial publisher Random House. He closed the press in 1971 and concentrated on writing and preparing exhibitions about the history of books and printing, working with the

Pierpont Morgan Library, Dartmouth College Library, and other institutions. The Morgan Library celebrated Blumenthal in its exhibition *The Spiral Press through Four Decades* (1966), and for the library he organized *Art of the Printed Book, 1455-1955: Masterpieces of Typography through Five Centuries* in 1973. Blumenthal wrote a memoir, *Typographic Years: a Printer's Journey through a Half-century, 1925-1975*, which was published in 1982. His final two books were *Robert Frost and his Printers* (1985) and *Bruce Rogers: a Life in Letters, 1870-1957* (1989), both published by W. Thomas Taylor.

Joseph Blumenthal and Ann White Blackshear were married in New York City on April 25, 1929. Ann Blumenthal had been a copywriter prior to their marriage and was active in charitable work, particularly those related to Quaker causes. Over the years, the Blumenthals had homes in the city, in Valhalla, New York, and in West Cornwall, Connecticut. Divorced in 1951, the couple remarried again in Peekskill, New York, on April 25, 1952, and died together in their home in West Cornwall on July 11, 1990.

Collection Overview

The Joseph Blumenthal Papers spans the period from 1922 through 1991 and primarily contains correspondence, personal papers, photographs, and research and writing files that document the life and work of an American printer, printing historian, and type designer. There are no business or financial records present for the Spiral Press. The papers are organized into three series: Correspondence; Personal Papers; and Writings and Exhibitions.

Series I, Correspondence (1805-22) contains incoming letters from friends and colleagues writing on both personal and professional topics, including letters regarding his Emerson typeface. The second of the two folders holds letters that the Blumenthals received in 1990, the last year of their lives. Series III contains additional correspondence regarding the publications and exhibitions, including fan mail. Among the writers was the poet Harold Corbin, who enclosed six of his poems.

Series II, Personal Papers (1921-1990) holds the Blumenthals' passports and visas, documents related to their two marriages, photographs of the couple alone and together, and other personal effects, including two small volumes created as personal tributes, and letters outlining their end-of-life planning. The earliest photograph is of Joseph Blumenthal dating from 1922, and the latest are color snapshots of the couple taken in April 1990. Included are images taken of the Blumenthals at their homes in Westchester County, New York, and in West Cornwall, Connecticut, as well as during their travels in Germany in the 1930s. Also present are formal portraits of Joseph Blumenthal taken by Arnold Newman and Robert Nacht, and individual portraits of the couple made about 1930 by Hermine Turner, the daughter and studio successor of noted portraitist Gertrude Käsebier.

Series III, Writings and Exhibitions (1953-1990) contains a variety of manuscripts, typescripts, clipped reviews, correspondence, and research files related to Joseph Blumenthal's career as a printer and printing historian. Projects documented here range from a lecture delivered at the Frick Museum to publications and exhibitions with printed catalogues. Also here are a set of profiles Blumenthal wrote on the libraries in his region, the northwest corner of Connecticut, for his local newspaper. The most complete set of files exists for his final project, a

biography of the book designer Bruce Rogers, and contains his research files including photocopies of letters written by Rogers to Henry Bullen, Crosby Gaige, Porter Garnett, George Macy, Carl Rollins, among others, as well as Blumenthal's correspondence with W. Thomas Taylor regarding production and distribution of the volume.

Box Folder

SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE 1963-1990

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent, followed by general files.

1	1	Corbin, Harold	1987-1990
	2	Cornwall Free Library	1979-1989
	3	Monotype Corporation Limited	1983-1984
	4	Rochester Institute of Technology	1977-1980
	5-6	General correspondence, arranged chronologically	1963-1990

Box Folder

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>		
		SERIES II. PERSONAL PAPERS	1921-1991
		Arranged alphabetically.	
2	7	Address book	undated
	8	Anniversary book and list, 1921-1990	1954-1990
	9	"A W B," small volume printed for Ann Blumenthal	1971 March 24
	10	Biographical sketches and profiles Also stored in Box 8, folder 60	1934-1982
	11	Commonplace book kept by Ann Blumenthal	undated
	12	Letters to Ken Keskinen regarding death and arrangements	1986-1991
	13	Marriage certificates and records	1929-1952
		Membership certificate, The Society of Printers Stored in: Box 8, folder 61	1976
	14	"1929 1939," bound anniversary volume in box	1939
3	15	Obituaries and tributes Also stored in Box 8, folder 62	1990
	16	Passports and visas	1921-1957
	17	Photographs Also stored in Box 8, folder 63	1922-1990
		Stock certificate, Bird & Bull Press Stored in: Box 8, folder 61	1977
	18	Type set for Spiral Press letterhead	undated
	19	Miscellaneous documents	1935-1987, undated

Box Folder

SERIES III. WRITINGS AND EXHIBITIONS 1953-1990

Arranged chronologically.

4	20	"Book Design, American Style," in <i>Publisher's Weekly</i>	1953
	21	"The Role of the Printer," in <i>Library of Congress Quarterly Journal</i>	1965
	22-23	<i>Spiral Press through Four Decades</i> , Pierpont Morgan Library Also stored in Box 8, folder 64	1965-1966
	24	Lecture on beautiful books, Frick Museum	1968
	25	<i>Art of the Printed Book, 1455-1955</i> , Pierpont Morgan Library Also stored in Box 8, folder 65	1973-1978
	26-27	<i>The Printed Book in America</i> , Dartmouth College Library Also stored in Box 8, folder 66	1976-1988
	28	<i>The Typographic Years</i>	1977-1989
5	29-30	<i>The Typographic Years</i>	1977-1989
		Histories of "Northwest Corner" [Connecticut] libraries, in <i>Lakeville Journal</i> Stored in: Box 8, folder 67	1978
	31-32	<i>Robert Frost and his Printers</i>	1963-1986
		<i>Bruce Rogers: a Life in Letters</i>	
	33-38	Correspondence and research files	1984-1990
6	39-51	Copies of Rogers letters	
7	52-58	Rogers letters and writings on Rogers by others	
	59	Miscellaneous notes	1989-1990

Box Folder

OVERSIZE

From Series II

8	60	Biographical sketches, profiles, and clippings	1932- 1977
	61	Membership certificate and stock certificate	1976, 1977
	62	Obituaries and tributes	1990
	63	Portrait photographs by Hermine Turner	circa 1930

From Series III

	64	<i>Spiral Press through Four Decades</i> , Pierpont Morgan Library	1966
	65	<i>Art of the Printed Book, 1455-1955</i> , Pierpont Morgan Library	1973
	66	<i>The Printed Book in America</i> , Dartmouth College Library	1977
	67	Histories of "Northwest Corner" [Connecticut] libraries	1978