CSC 039

JOSEPH 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

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.
### SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE 1963-1990

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent, followed by general files.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Correspondent</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Corbin, Harold</td>
<td>1987-1990</td>
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<td>Cornwall Free Library</td>
<td>1979-1989</td>
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<td>Monotype Corporation Limited</td>
<td>1983-1984</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rochester Institute of Technology</td>
<td>1977-1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td></td>
<td>General correspondence, arranged chronologically</td>
<td>1963-1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SERIES II. PERSONAL PAPERS 1921-1991

Arranged alphabetically.

2 7 Address book undated


9 “A W B,” small volume printed for Ann Blumenthal 1971 March 24

10 Biographical sketches and profiles 1934-1982
Also stored in Box 8, folder 60

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

14 “1929 1939,” bound anniversary volume in box 1939

3 15 Obituaries and tributes 1990
Also stored in Box 8, folder 62

16 Passports and visas 1921-1957

17 Photographs 1922-1990
Also stored in Box 8, folder 63
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
SERIES III. WRITINGS AND EXHIBITIONS 1953-1990

Arranged chronologically.

4  20  “Book Design, American Style,” in Publisher’s Weekly 1953
22-23  Spiral Press through Four Decades, Pierpont Morgan Library
       Also stored in Box 8, folder 64 1965-1966
24  Lecture on beautiful books, Frick Museum 1968
25  Art of the Printed Book, 1455-1955, Pierpont Morgan Library
       Also stored in Box 8, folder 65 1973-1978
26-27  The Printed Book in America, Dartmouth College Library
       Also stored in Box 8, folder 66 1976-1988
28  The Typographic Years 1977-1989
5  29-30  The Typographic Years 1977-1989

      Histories of “Northwest Corner” [Connecticut] libraries, in
      Lakeville Journal
      Stored in: Box 8, folder 67 1978
31-32  Robert Frost and his Printers 1963-1986
       Bruce Rogers: a Life in Letters
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
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<th>Box</th>
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<td>Biographical sketches, profiles, and clippings</td>
<td>1932-1977</td>
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<td>Membership certificate and stock certificate</td>
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<td>Obituaries and tributes</td>
<td>1990</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td>Portrait photographs by Hermine Turner</td>
<td>circa 1930</td>
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<td><em>Art of the Printed Book, 1455-1955, Pierpont Morgan Library</em></td>
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