



The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Harry Miller Lydenberg papers

1892-1961

MssCol 1821

Processed by Valerie Wingfield, 1986. Additions processed by Robert Sink, 1987.

Summary

Creator: Lydenberg, Harry Miller, 1874-1960

Title: Harry Miller Lydenberg papers

Date: 1892-1961

Size: 23.2 linear feet (55 boxes, 1 volume, 1 oversized folder)

Source: Donated by Harry M. Lydenberg, Deoch Fulton, and Mrs. William Davis, 1941, 1961, and 1968; and by the Lydenberg family, 1986 and 1989.

Abstract: Harry Miller Lydenberg (1874-1960) was an American librarian, scholar, and the third director of the New York Public Library, from 1934 to 1941. His work for the library spanned nearly forty years. The collection dates from 1892 to 1961 and contains correspondence, writings, photographs, and other materials that document Lydenberg's career and personal interests.

Access: Advance notice required.

Preferred citation: Harry Miller Lydenberg papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Processed by Valerie Wingfield, 1986. Additions processed by Robert Sink, 1987; Melanie Yolles, 1989; and Robyn Hjerstad, 2015.

Creator History

Harry Miller Lydenberg, NYPL Director, bibliographer and author was born on November 18, 1876 in Dayton, Ohio, the eldest son of Wesley Braxton Lydenberg and Marianna Miller. After graduating from Harvard University in 1896 with an A. B., Lydenberg moved to New York City. He began his career as a cataloguer for the New York Public Library. Lydenberg's next appointment was to be the first to manage the Manuscript Division for three years. This was followed by appointments as assistant to the Director 1899-1908; Chief Reference Librarian 1909-1927; Assistant Director 1928-1934 and Director 1934-1941.

In the Fall of 1923 Lydenberg, then Chief Reference Librarian, undertook a trip to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in order to re-establish contacts for the acquisition of library materials that had been cut during World War I and the Russian Revolution. During the trip Lydenberg traveled to Canada; London; Paris; Brussels; Amsterdam; Berlin and Leipzig, Germany; Riga, Latvia; Moscow, Petrograd, and Kiev, Soviet Union; Lwow, Warsaw, and Krakow, Poland; Belgrade; Prague; Leipzig; Paris; London; Edinburgh; and Liverpool. While in the Soviet Union, Lydenberg was accompanied by Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Chief of the Library's Slavonic Division, and his wife.

After Lydenberg retired from the NYPL, he organized and was Director of the Bibliotheca Benjamin Franklin in Mexico City under the sponsorship of the co-ordinator of the Inter-American Affairs and the American Library Association 1941-1943. In 1943, he became Director of the American Library Association's Board on International Relations in Washington and in 1946, a member of the Library of Congress Purchasing Mission to Germany. Lydenberg's other professional activities include being President of the American Library Association, the Bibliographical Society of America and the New York Library Club. Lydenberg published over 200 works, among them the History of the New York Public Library, 1923; John Shaw Billings. 1924; The Care and Repair of Books, 1931; and Crossing the Line, 1957.

Lydenberg married Madeliene Day in 1912, and there were two children John and Mary. Lydenberg died April 17, 1960 in Westerville, Ohio and was survived by his family.

Scope and Content Note

The Harry Miller Lydenberg papers date from 1892 to 1961 and document his interest in library-related matters, particularly after he retired from the New York Public Library.

General Correspondence, arranged alphabetically, primarily consists of incoming letters. Subjects include his service as director of Bibliotheca Benjamin Franklin in New Mexico; conservation treatment of library materials; and other business and personal matters. Subject Correspondence, arranged alphabetically, overlaps the same areas as the general correspondence, particularly on the effect of World War II on libraries. Prominent correspondents include Edwin Hatfield Anderson, Paul A. Bennett, Willa Cather, Verner W. Clapp, Wilberforce Eames, Charlton C. Jernigan, Helmut Kuhn, Lewis Cass Ledyard, Frederick C. Melcher, Keyes Metcalf and Charles E. Rush. Organizations documented in the correspondence include the American Antiquarian Society; the American Book Center for Devastated Libraries, Inc.; American Council for Learned Societies; the American Library Association (ALA); American Philosophical Society; and Bibliotheca Benjamin Franklin. The New York Public Library correspondence is after Lydenberg's tenure as director. His correspondents are John Archer, Ralph Beals, Karl Brown, Edward G. Freehafer and Karl Kup. Writings and Speeches contain typescripts, correspondence, notes, and printed material relating to Lydenberg's writings. Personal assorted papers regard personal subject interests, including family and genealogical history. Photographs are of Lydenberg; his relatives and ancestors; and friends and libraries, primarily after World War II. There is an album of Lydenberg and associates visiting Europe, Russia, and the Balkans on a library mission between 1923 and 1924. Letters written to Lydenberg's wife, Madeliene Day Lydenberg, are also included.

Additional materials were processed and integrated into the collection in 1987, 1989, and 2015. Materials consist of correspondence; writings; certificates and awards; and a small amount of material relating to Lydenberg's work as the director of the ALA Office of International Relations.

Key Terms

Subjects

Acquisitions (Libraries)
Books -- Conservation and restoration
Booksellers and bookselling -- Europe
Libraries -- Europe
Libraries -- Mexico
Libraries -- Soviet Union
World War, 1939-1945 -- Libraries

Geographic Names

Europe -- Description and travel
Europe, Eastern -- Description and travel
Soviet Union -- Description and travel

Occupations

Librarians

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographs

Names

Anderson, Edwin Hatfield, 1861-1947
Archer, John, 1886-1956
Beals, Ralph A. (Ralph Albert)
Bennett, Paul A., 1897-1966
Brown, Karl, 1895-1970
Cather, Willa, 1873-1947
Clapp, Verner W. (Verner Warren), 1901-1972
Eames, Wilberforce, 1855-1937
Freehafer, Edward Geier, 1909-1985
Fulton, Deoch
Jernigan, Charlton C.
Kuhn, Helmut, 1899-
Kup, Karl, 1903-
Ledyard, Lewis Cass.
Lydenberg, Harry Miller, 1874-1960
Melcher, Frederick Gershon, 1879-
Metcalf, Keyes DeWitt, 1889-1983
Rush, Charles E.
Thurman, William
Yarmolinsky, Avrahm, 1890-1975
Benjamin Franklin Library (Mexico City, Mexico)

Container List

Series I: General Correspondence

- b. 1 A - BI
- b. 2 BI - F
- b. 3 G - J
- b. 4 K - M
- b. 5 M - R
- b. 6 S - Z

Series II: Subject Correspondence 1943-1954

- b. 7 Bible 1952-1953
- b. 7 Bick Festschrift 1947-1949
- b. 7 Bookman's Holiday 1943-1947
A - Z.
- b. 8 Books 1952-1957
printed matter.
- b. 8 Books for War Devastated Areas
(See also: U. S. Book Exchange).
- b. 8 Germany 1947-1954

Series III: Prominent Correspondents 1931-1958

- b. 9 Anderson, Edwin Hatfield 1942-1947
- b. 9 Bennett, Paul & Typophiles 1942-1949
- b. 9 Cather, Willa 1922, 1940
- b. 9 Clapp, Verner W 1956-1957
- b. 9 Coswell, Joseph Green
- b. 9 Doren, Electra C 1952-1955
-drafts of articles.
- b. 9 Eames, Wilberforce 1953-1956
-articles by HML.
- b. 9 Gerould, James Thayer
- b. 10 Jernigan, Charlton C 1949-1957
- b. 10 Kuhn, Helmut 1947-1952
- b. 10 Ledyard, Lewis Cass 1931-1932
- b. 10 Melchar, Frederick C 1945
- b. 10 Metcalf, Keyes 1937-1958
- b. 11 Rush, Charles E 1946-1948
- b. 11 Skeel, Emily (Mrs.) 1942-1952
- b. 12 Wolf, Dr. Gerhard & family 1947-1958

Series IV: Organizational Correspondence 1942-1960

- b. 12 American Antiquarian Society 1955-1960
- b. 12 Book Center for War Devastated Libraries, Inc 1947-1948
- b. 12-13 Council of Learned Societies 1948-1950
- b. 13 Documentation Institute 1947

Series IV: Organizational Correspondence (cont.)
American Antiquarian Society (cont.)

- b. 13 Libraries Association 1953-1959
- b. 14 Library in Paris 1947
- b. 14 Philosophical Society 1941-1957
- b. 14 Phillips Fund, Barlow matter 1951-1952
- b. 15 Phillips Fund 1944-1947
- b. 15 Committee of the Library 1955-1956
- b. 16 Archaeological Institute 1950-1956
- b. 16 Archons of Colophon 1958-1960
- b. 16 Asherville, North Carolina. - Park Memorial Library 1956-1957
- b. 16 Association Board for Christian Colleges in China 1946-1948
- b. 16 Bibliographical Society of America 1946-1955
- Bibliotheca Benjamin Franklin
- b. 16 Correspondence 1946-1952
- b. 16 Reports of the Director 1947
- b. 17 Reports of the Director 1948-1949
- b. 17 R. R. Bowker Co 1943-1959
- b. 17 Century Association 1942-1958
- b. 18 Century Association 1955-1958
- b. 18 Cosmos Club
- b. 18 Greensboro, North Carolina 1945-1956
- b. 18 Daily News
- b. 18 Friends of the Library
- b. 18 Library Club
- b. 18-19 Public Library
- b. 19 Grolier Club
- b. 19 Guilford Co. Horticultural Society 1951-1956
- b. 19 Official 1948-1956
- b. 20 Harvard
- b. 20 New York State Library Association 1950-1954
- b. 21 North Carolina (various institutions)
- b. 21 The Paper Institute
- b. 21 Penn University - Library Surveys 1945-1948
- b. 21 Symposium 1951
- b. 22 Pulitzer Prizes 1947-1948
- b. 22 Rutgers University 1955-1956
- b. 22 United Nations 1947-1954
- United States
- b. 22 Army Medical Library 1949-1959
- b. 23 Book Exchange Inc 1948-1955
- b. 23 Library of Congress 1947-1958
- b. 23 Mission 1945-1946

Series IV: Organizational Correspondence (cont.)
United States (cont.)

- b. 24 Quarterly Book List 1950-1956
- b. 24 Trust Co 1942-1948
- b. 24 Miscellaneous
- New York Public Library
- b. 24 A - E
- b. 25 F - Z
- b. 26 Archer, John
- b. 26 Beals, Ralph
- b. 26 Brown, Karl
- b. 26 Freehafer, Edward G
- b. 27 Kup, Carl
- b. 27 Miscellaneous

Series V: Writings and Speeches 1917-1953

- b. 27 Blind Impression
notes, etc.
- b. 28 Crossing the Line
- b. 28 Copyright letters; Correspondence 1953
- b. 29-30 Correspondence 1957
Notes; photostats.
- b. 31 Irving's Knickerbocker and Some of Its Sources
- b. 31 Lincoln and Prohibition. Correspondence 1923-1953
Correspondence 1952 HML with Library of Congress. regards Lincoln's letters.
- b. 32 Lincoln and Prohibition. Appendices to the American Antiquarian Society
paper
1925 photostats transcribed with corrections for the AAS.
- b. 32 Paper or Sawdust 1917
- b. 32 Eternal as the Printed Page 1925
- b. 32 Harlem Library founded in 1817 June 1928
Harlem Magazine
- b. 32 On the Preservation of Manuscripts and Printed Books September 1928
Library Journal, p. 712-716
- b. 32 The Migration of European Collections to America October 15, 1928
Library Journal, p. 845-847
- b. 32 The Scarsdale Public Library December 15, 1928
Library Journal
- b. 32 The Special Library in the Public Library, address at the ALA 1929
- b. 32 Carteret Book Club Talk February 27, 1932
- b. 32 Remarks at dedication of the library, USC September 1932
- b. 32 Radio Broadcast at Des Moines, Iowa October 1932
- b. 32 Chicago Rotary Club December 1932
- b. 33 Radio Discussion January 19, 1933
- b. 33 Librarians & Educators June 1932
- b. 33 Books, do they help in Adult Education June 1932

Series V: Writings and Speeches (cont.)

- b. 33 Unanswered Questions 1932
- b. 33 Books Publishers TALK 1935
- b. 33 Books and Reading 1935
- b. 33 Encyclopedia Britannia 1935
- b. 33 Esdaile article, written for Arundell Esdaile 1935
- b. 34 National Association of Shorthand Reporters 1935
- b. 34 National Arts Club 1936
- b. 34 Peter Piper's Practical Principles of Plain and Perfect Pronunciation 1936
- b. 34 101 Club 1936
- b. 34 Tommorrow - notes of a rambling chat on literary developments with members of the Harvard Library Club, article 1936
- b. 34 Women's National Book Association 1936
- b. 34 American Institute of Graphic Art 1936
- b. 34 Another's Boy's Town 1936
- b. 34 NYU 1936
- b. 34 Libraries & Lyceums. review of book by Tolman 1937
- b. 34 Saturday Review 1937
- b. 34 Are Libraries cultivating the Psychological Point of Sale 1937
- b. 34 Eames Tribute 1937
- b. 34 Typophiles - untitled drafts 1937
- b. 35 John Shaw Billings 1938
- b. 35 Geography of Reading, review of book by L. R. Wilson 1938
- b. 35 The Library and Its Readers, radio talk, WNYC 1938
- b. 35 Retirement of Dr. Gerould from Princeton. article in LJ 1939
- b. 35 America's Too-Publi Libraries, comment on article in American Mercury 1939
- b. 35 Papermaker and Printer in the Time of Gutenberg. by H. Bockwitz, translated by HML 1939
- b. 35 Association of Medical Directories. talk at Advertising Club 1939
- b. 35 The Collector's Progress. Journal of Adult Education 1940
- b. 35 Berkshire Republican Library- correspondence & notes 1940
- b. 35 The Invention as It Affects Libraries. talk at Columbia U 1940
- b. 36 The University Press and the Printer. radio talk Tribute to Alfred A. Knopf 1940
- b. 36 The Berkshire Republican Library. article in American Antiquarian Society proceedings 1941
- b. 36 T. Franklin Currier & Selective Cataloguing at Harvard review of Pierce Butler's "The Origin of Printing in Europe" 1941
- b. 36 "As a Librarian", tribute to Augustus Shearer 1941
- b. 36 Josephine Adams Rathbone article in ALA Bulletin 1941
- b. 36 Speeches - miscellaneous 1941
- b. 37-38 Biographical & other works 1941
- b. 39 Notes - Ancient and medieval libraries 1941
- b. 40 Notes - United Kingdom 1941

Series V: Writings and Speeches (cont.)

- b. 41 Notes - miscellaneous Europe 1941
- b. 42 Harvard printed material 1941
- b. 42 Libraries - assorted 1941

Series VI: Assorted Personal Papers 1941-1951

- b. 42 Car papers 1941
- b. 42 Gardening 1941
- b. 43 HML house in Greensboro, NC 1941
- b. 43 Scarsdale, NY 1941-1951
sale to G. W. Bates.
- b. 43 Virginia 1947
- b. 43 Yucatan
- b. 44 Lydenberg - Mexico 1941-1943
Family records; retirement; wills; correspondence 1932-1951.
- b. 44 Lydenberg, Walter (brother). correspondence
- b. 45 Income taxes
- b. 45 Passport
- b. 45 "The Lady Tablet of Friendship", belonging to Rachel A. Day (1 volume)
- b. 46 Series VII: Photographs: album
- b. 47 Series VIII: Photographs (loose)
- b. 48 Series XIX: Printed Material

Series X: Letters to Madeliene Day Lydenberg

This series consists of manuscripts and photocopies of Lydenberg's letters home to his wife. The letters include notes on daily events, observations on culture and politics, and descriptions of geography and urban life from his travels. There are extensive references to his visits to foreign libraries and his conversations with both librarians and booksellers. In addition, Lydenberg recorded his activities on behalf of the New York Public Library, including interviews with candidates to be chief of the Jewish and Music Divisions, efforts to acquire materials from booksellers, and contacts with foreign officials to promote the international exchange of printed materials. See Series XI: Additions for additional letters to Madeliene Day Lydenberg.

The letters are accompanied by a 1944 note from Lydenberg regarding his desire not to have the letters published. See the accession record 87 M 10 for a more complete discussion of the letters. These letters are supplemented by Lydenberg's correspondence with Edwin H. Anderson, Director of N. Y. P. L., in the Library's Archives.

- b. 49 Photocopies of letters to Madeliene Day Lydenberg (.25 linear feet)
- b. 50 Letters to Madeliene Day Lydenberg

Series XI: Additions 1892-1961

Additional materials were processed and integrated into the collection in 1987, 1989, and 2015. Materials consist of correspondence; writings; certificates and awards; and a small amount of material relating to Lydenberg's work as the director of the ALA Office of International Relations. Among the correspondence are letters that Lydenberg wrote to his wife and family. Writings consist of are typescript diaries, and original manuscript of "An Essay Towards a Bibliography of John Eliot, and materials gathered by Lydenberg for his translation of "Papermaker and Printer in the Time of Gutenberg." ALA materials document Lydenberg's tour of Latin America in 1944, and ALA's Midwinter meeting in 1946.

- b. 46 Correspondence
- b. 46 With John Archer and William Thurman 1941-1959
Successive superintendents of the Printing and Bindery Office, New York Public Library.

Series XI: Additions (cont.)

Correspondence (cont.)

- b. 46 **With Deoch Fulton 1942-1959**
Editor of the Bulletin, New York Public Library
Memorandum regarding activities of the American Chamber of Commerce (in Mexico).
During the years, 1939-44, by Floyd D. Ransom, with letter of transmittal from Ransom to
Lydenberg dated September 15, 1967. (filed with Biblio. Benjamin Franklin).
- b. 54 f. 2-9 **Letters to Madeliene Day Lydenberg and Family 1915-1946**
- b. 55 f. 1-2 **Letters to Madeliene Day Lydenberg and Family 1946-1951**

Writings

- b. 46 "An Essay Towards a Bibliography of John Eliot"
 - b. 51 f. 1 "Papermaker and Printer in the Time of Gutenberg" 1939
- Diary Typescripts
- b. 51 f. 2-7 1941-1944
 - b. 52 f. 1-7 1944-1951
 - b. 53 f. 1 1954-1956
- b. 53 f. 2-5 American Library Association Office of International Relations 1944, 1946
 - o. 1 Certificates and Awards 1892-1947
 - b. 53 f. 6-8 Certificates and Awards 1896-1946
 - b. 54 f. 1 Miscellaneous Letters, Articles, and Photographs 1927-1961
 - b. 55 f. 3 New York Public Library Pin 1911