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Descriptive Summary

Identifier        ICU.SPCL.CANNONWB
Title             Cannon, William B. Papers
Date              1963-1999
Size              9 boxes (4.5 linear feet)
Repository        Special Collections Research Center
                  University of Chicago Library
                  1100 East 57th Street
                  Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract          William B. Cannon (1920-2006) was a professor at the University of
                  Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration and a University
                  administrator, from 1954 until 1989. He was concurrently involved in
                  the United States Bureau of the Budget during Lyndon B. Johnson’s
                  administration. Cannon was a key figure in the development of Johnson’s
                  "War on Poverty" policy, including the controversial Community Action
                  Program implemented in 1964. The William B. Cannon Papers contain
                  material related to both his academic and political careers, including
                  correspondence, policy proposals, government task force reports, press
                  releases, teaching materials, and writings.

Information on Use

Access

Series IV contains administrative correspondence that is restricted until 2016.

The remainder of the collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Cannon, William B.
Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

William B. Cannon (1920-2006) was a professor and administrator at the University of Chicago
between 1954 and 1989. He was concurrently involved with national politics, active in the
Bureau of the Budget during Lyndon B. Johnson’s administration. Cannon was a key figure in
the development of Johnson’s "War on Poverty" policy, including the controversial Community
Action Program implemented in 1964.
Cannon was born in Cascade, Iowa, where he completed a Catholic high school education. Cannon entered the University of Chicago in 1941, but his tenure as a student was interrupted by army service between 1943 and 1946. He received his undergraduate degree in 1947, followed in 1949 by a Master’s in Political Science. Between 1954 and 1958 he served as the University’s Director of Social Science Development and Assistant Vice President.

By the 1960s Cannon had moved into government administration, where he worked at the Bureau of the Budget. Between 1962 and 1965 he was Assistant Chief of the Office of Legislative Reference for Health, Education, and Welfare Programs. In 1965 he became Chief of the Bureau’s Education, Manpower and Science Division, and two years later he was named Director of Operational Coordination and Policy Research. He was active on Presidential Task Forces on education in 1964 and 1967.

President Johnson’s Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 instituted new structures for distributing federal resources and administering social welfare programs. Cannon was instrumental in developing the Community Action Program (CAP), which funded anti-poverty initiatives at the local level. Participating agencies were not required to justify their programs to civic or state departments. Although this was designed to ensure "maximum feasible participation" in the "War on Poverty," it created political tensions between the administration and local authorities, as mayoral offices accused Johnson of undermining federalism and politicizing the poor.

Cannon returned to the University of Chicago in 1968, serving as Vice President for Programs and Projects until 1974. He left Chicago for two years act to as Dean of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, but returned in 1976 when he became faculty at the School of Social Service Administration (SSA). Until 1984 he was also the University’s Vice President for Business and Finance. He taught SSA courses on public policy until his retirement to Austin, Texas in 1989. Cannon remained involved in social welfare programs outside academia throughout his career, participating in nonprofit corporations such as the Youthwork Corporation.

As an academic, Cannon continued to be an outspoken Democrat and a believer in "maximum feasible participation of the poor." He felt the Reagan administration had destroyed the traditional alliance between the middle-classes and lower classes. In his New Class Politics (1986), he argued the Democratic Party should cease to compete for middle-class votes and turn their attention to counter-organizing the non-middle classes. By focusing on party organization at the local "club" level, Cannon hoped the American poor would develop a distinct political and electoral identity, eventually forming a dominant bloc in the Democratic Party which could push new policy directives. He continued to write on government policy through the Clinton administration.
Cannon died in 2006. He was survived by his four children, Julia, Dominic, William, and Robert.

**Scope Note**

The William B. Cannon Papers span 1963-1999 and are organized into four series:

Series I: University of Chicago, contains correspondence related to Cannon's administrative role at the University of Chicago. This series also contains syllabi for courses Cannon taught at the School of Social Service Administration, and correspondence with colleagues outside the university. It includes reports by external review boards on the National Institute of Education and the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research; Cannon sat on these boards as an affiliate of the University of Chicago. Material spans 1970-1988. Restricted material has been transferred to Series IV.


Series III: Writings, contains drafts and copies of books, reviews, and papers written and given by Cannon. These primarily focus on the role of the government in education and social welfare. Papers, proposals, and speeches drafted for specific federal policy initiatives can be found in Series I. Material spans 1964-1999.

Series IV: Restricted, contains University of Chicago administrative correspondence transferred from Series I.

**Related Resources**

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html

University of Chicago. School of Social Service Administration. Records

**Subject Headings**

- Cannon, William B., 1920-
- United States. Bureau of the Budget
- University of Chicago. School of Social Service Administration
• Public policy
• Race riots
• Social classes -- United States

INVENTORY

Series I: University of Chicago

This series contains correspondence related to Cannon’s administrative role at the University of Chicago. This series also contains syllabi for courses Cannon taught at the School of Social Service Administration, and correspondence with colleagues outside the university. It includes reports by external review boards on the National Institute of Education and the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research; Canon sat on these boards as an affiliate of the University of Chicago. Material spans 1970-1988. Restricted material has been transferred to Series IV.

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  Correspondence, administrative, 1970-1971
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  Correspondence, professional, 1977-1987
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  Peer review, University of Chicago Press, 1980
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"University of Chicago Magazine," 1982

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Series II: Public Policy


Box 2
Folder 5-10
Bureau of the Budget, correspondence and proposals, 1963-1967

Box 3
Folder 1-2
Cannon, interviews, circa 1960s, 1982

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Cannon, speech to the Civil Service Commission, 1967

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Folder 4
"The Current" magazine, 1970

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Detroit Riots, reports, circa 1967

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Folder 12-14
Taskforce on Education, correspondence and reports, 1963-1964

Box 4
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Taskforce on Education, correspondence and reports, 1964-1967

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Folder 15
Watts Riots, reports, 1965

Series III: Writings

Series III: Writings, contains drafts and copies of books, reviews, and papers written and given by Cannon. These primarily focus on the role of the government in education and social welfare. Papers, proposals, and speeches drafted for specific federal policy initiatives can be found in Series I. Material spans 1964-1999 and is organized chronologically.

Box 5
Folder 1
"A Different Approach to Managing Personnel," draft, 1964

Box 5
Folder 2
Speech, Atlantic City, 1966

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Folder 3
"Power and Poverty," address, American Academy, 1967

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"Education in the Cities," speech, 1968

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"Government and the Arts," speech, St. George’s School, 1968

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Speech, Urban Training Center, 1968

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Folder 9
  Public policy, book reviews, 1970, 1973
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Folder 10
  "Evaluation Questionnaires Reveal a Gap," speech, 1971
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Folder 11
  "Graduate Student Aid Market System," draft, 1971
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  "Outline for a Plan for Operation the National Foundation on Education," draft, 1971
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Folder 13
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  "Innovation in Education in a Time of Financial Adversity," speech, 1973
Box 5
Folder 15-17
  The Dangerous Abuse of the Lower Class, draft, 1974-1975
Box 6
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  The Dangerous Abuse of the Lower Class, draft, 1974-1975
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  "National Management of Policy Interconnected Problems," 1975
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  "Implementation of Educational Policy," address, American Education Research Association, 1976
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  "Memoranda on Revisions of the Social Security Act," draft, 1980
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Ministry of Culture, review, 1980
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"A Proposal to Counter Reagan Youth Policy," draft, 1982
Box 6
Folder 13
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Folder 14
"The Budget: the Cockpit of a New Society," draft, 1982
Box 6
Folder 15-16
Non-Middle Class Politics, the Democratic Party, and Federal Budgets: A New Program of Political Action, draft, 1983-1985
Box 7
Folder 1-2
Non-Middle Class Politics, the Democratic Party, and Federal Budgets: A New Program of Political Action, draft, 1983-1985
Box 7
Folder 3
"A Critique of, and Alternative to, the Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America," draft, 1984
Box 7
Folder 4
New Class Politics: The Polarization of America and What We Can Do About It," copy, 1986
Box 7
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"The War on Poverty with Special Reference to Community Action," draft, 1986
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"A Proposal to Change Vocational and High School Education," draft, 1987
Box 7
Folder 8
"A New Way of Dealing with the Federal Budget Crisis," draft, 1990
Box 7
Folder 9
"Biography of Political Principle," draft, 1990
Box 7
Folder 10
"Old Directions in American Politics," draft, 1990
Box 7
Folder 11
"Affirmative Action," draft, 1994
Box 8
Folder 1
"Memos on Health Care Legislation," draft, 1995
Box 8
Folder 2
"Impressions of the Clinton Administration 1994 Budget," draft, 1999
Box 8
Folder 3
"Modern Economics and Community," draft, circa 1990s
Box 8
Folder 4
"How to Operate a Government," draft, undated
Box 8
Folder 5
"Reorganization of the Federal Government: Organizing Local Participation," draft, undated

Series IV: Restricted

This series contains administrative correspondence from the University of Chicago that is restricted for thirty years. Material has been transferred from Series I.

Box 9
Folder 1-3
Correspondence, University of Chicago administration, 1983-1986