Guide to the University of Chicago Division of the Physical Sciences Records 1935-1949
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Descriptive Summary

Identifier    ICU.SPCL.DIVPHYSSCI
Title         University of Chicago. Division of the Physical Sciences. Records
Date          1935-1949
Size          13.5 linear feet (27 boxes)
Repository    Special Collections Research Center
              University of Chicago Library
              1100 East 57th Street
              Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract      Formed in 1930, by the 1940s the University of Chicago's Division of the
              Physical Sciences included the Departments of Astronomy and Astrophysics,
              Chemistry, Geography, Geology, Mathematics, Meteorology and Physics,
              as well as the Institute for the Study of Metals and the Institute for Nuclear
              Studies. The astronomer Walter Bartky served as dean of the division during
              this time. The records in this collection span a narrow period of time, with
              most of the material dating from the years 1942-1948. These records, which
              include correspondence, minutes, reports, contracts, and financial material,
              represent an important period in the development of the division, and
              document significant physical sciences research.

Information on Use

Access
Open for research. No restrictions

Citation
When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: University of Chicago.
Division of the Physical Sciences. Records, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research
Center, University of Chicago Library

Historical Note
As part of a university-wide reorganization, the University of Chicago's Division of the Physical
Sciences was formed to incorporate the Departments of Astronomy, Chemistry, Geology,
Mathematics, Military Science and Physics. During the 1940s, the division included the
Departments of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Chemistry, Geography, Geology, Mathematics,
Meteorology and Physics, as well as the Institute for the Study of Metals and the Institute for
Nuclear Studies. The astronomer Walter Bartky served as dean of the division during this time.
Some of the most critical scientific developments of the 20th century took place under the Division of the Physical Sciences during the 1940s, most famously Enrico Fermi’s 1942 achievement of the first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction. Further research and training programs in the physical sciences were supported by government contracts in the interest of national defense.

**Scope Note**

The records of the University of Chicago's Division of the Physical Sciences span a narrow period of time, with most of the material dating from the years 1942-1948. Nonetheless, this collection represents an important period in the development of the division, and documents significant physical sciences research projects.

Series I: Dean of Physical Sciences, Walter Bartky, 1945-1947, contains mainly correspondence with faculty, staff, students and university administrators. Minutes, reports, and financial material related to the administration of the division are found here; the Dean’s role in the larger administration of the University is also documented in this series.

Series II: Budgets and Expenses, includes departmental and divisional budgets, including revisions and preparatory material, as well as requests and vouchers for expenses covered in budgets. Most of this material dates from the years 1946-1949.

Series III: General Files, includes a broad variety of material, including correspondence, reports, minutes, course material, publications and other documents related to administration, research, and teaching in the division. Much of this material relates to the administration of government contracts in the late 1940s.

Series IV: Personnel, contains correspondence and other material related to matters such as appointments, salaries, assignments, and staffing levels. This series is organized by department or other administrative unit; material on individuals is filed according to his or her place of employment.

Series V: Financial Transactions, documents routine account activity in the division, with much of the material consisting of statements from the university’s comptroller’s office. Other types of material in this series include invoices, purchase orders, and reimbursement requests. Most of these files represent costs incurred through personnel expenses and the purchase of equipment and supplies; some relate to the costs and reimbursements for contract or grant-funded projects. Material in this subseries is typically filed according to the type of expense incurred, or by the administrative unit involved in the transaction.
Series VI: Diffraction Gratings Production, consists of a relatively small amount of material related to the production and sale of diffraction gratings for optical equipment, activities that involved the division’s Optical Shop, and were overseen by the astrophysicist Henry Gordon Gale. This series includes material such as correspondence with buyers, financial records, specifications and test results.

Series VII: Mathematics Lecture Notes, consists mainly of notes from advanced mathematics lectures given at New York University in the 1940s.

Series VIII: Research Administration, contains financial records, correspondence, contracts, reports, and other material related to research conducted in the division during the 1940s. Much of this research was funded by agencies of the federal government in the interest of national defense.

Series IX: Dean of Physical Sciences, Walter Bartky, 1942-1945, consists of material similar to that found in Series I, dating from an earlier span of years.

Series X: Divisional Ledgers and Budgets, represents financial transactions and preparations at the divisional level, from the late 1930s to the mid-1940s.

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

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

Bartky, Walter. Papers

University of Chicago. Department of Geology. Records

University of Chicago. Department of Geography. Records

University of Chicago. Department of Meteorology. Records

University of Chicago. Department of Physics. Records

**Subject Headings**
- Bartky, Walter, 1901-
- University of Chicago. Division of the Physical Sciences
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