

University of Chicago Library Special Collections Research Center

Guide to the Alfred E. Emerson Papers 1917-1976



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.EMERSON
Title	Emerson, Alfred Edwards. Papers
Date	1917-1976(inclusive)
Size	7 linear feet (14 boxes)
Repository	1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637

Abstract The Alfred E. Emerson Papers consist of seven linear feet and cover the period 1917 to 1976. The papers contain correspondence, calendars, lecture notes, photographs, committee and foundation records, as well as articles and reprints. Alfred Emerson was a professor of zoology and a central figure in what became known as the "Chicago school" of ecology. He developed a model of biological evolution in which the social group, rather than the individual organism, constitutes a superorganism that is the primary unit of natural selection. Much of his extensive research involved the study of termite physiological morphology and behavior.

Information on Use

Citation

When quoting material from this collection the preferred citation is:

Emerson, Alfred Edwards. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

Alfred Edwards Emerson was born in Ithaca, New York on December 31, 1896. He was also educated in Ithaca, receiving his B.S. (1918), M.A. (1920), and Ph.D (1925) from Cornell University. His first teaching appointment was as associate professor of zoology at the University of Pittsburgh (1925-1929). In 1929 he accepted a position as associate professor of zoology at the University of Chicago where he remained until his retirement in 1962; he achieved the rank of full professor in 1934. During his tenure at the University of Chicago, Prof. Emerson also held visiting appointments at the University of California at Berkeley (summer 1949) and Michigan State University (spring 1960), where he was awarded an honorary Sc.D. Emerson had two children by his first wife, Winifred Jelliffe, who died in 1949. His second wife, Eleanor Fish, died in 1971.

At the University of Chicago, Emerson was a central figure in what became known as the "Chicago school" of ecology. Along with Warder Clyde Allee and Thomas Park, with whom

he co-authored the groundbreaking *Principles of Animal Ecology* (1949), Emerson developed a model of biological evolution in which the social group, rather than the individual organism, constitutes a superorganism that is the primary unit of natural selection. This model represents competition, both within and between species, as operative at multiple levels within a total ecological system, generating either cooperation or conflict.

Emerson's contribution to the "Chicago school" of ecology was based on his extensive research on termite physiological morphology and behavior. Using behavior traits, such as geographically specific nest building techniques, as indices of sub-speciation among termites, Emerson not only helped to elaborate termite taxonomy to a high degree of precision, but discovered evidence of a link between social and biological evolution. As a result of his research on termites, Emerson came to view reproductive behavior and division of labor as the fundamental group adaptations responsible for processes of social evolution, analogous in function to physiological adaptations in processes of biological evolution. Emerson further theorized that the social evolution of superorganisms tends toward greater overall efficiency and total ecological homeostasis or equilibrium.

Emerson also sought to interpret the implications of his work on the relationship between social and biological evolution for human social ethics. During World War II, Emerson spoke out against the misuse of Darwin's doctrine of the survival of the fittest as justification for nationalist aggression and totalitarian domination of the weak by the strong. He argued that cooperation more often than struggle is the key to survival and well-being among humans as well as other social animals. He did not idealize cooperation, however, as an end in itself, but formulated a relativistic natural ethics according to which the good and the right are those things and actions that function to promote "efficient homeostasis for all concerned."

In addition to teaching and prolific publication, Emerson conducted extensive field research abroad and participated in many scientific organizations. He traveled widely in search of termite populations for study, visiting Central and South America, numerous Caribbean and Pacific islands, and parts of Asia, Africa, and Australia. He was a central figure in the Ecological Society of America, serving as Secretary-Treasurer in 1931, editor of *Ecology* from 1932 to 1939, and president in 1941. Emerson was also a member of the Society for Systematic Zoology of which he was president in 1958, and a co-organizer of the Society for the Study of Evolution, which he served as president in 1960. Alfred E. Emerson died on October 3, 1976.

Scope Note

The Alfred E. Emerson Papers consist of seven linear feet and cover the period 1917-1976. The collection has been arranged into six series: Personal; Correspondence; Committees, Foundations, and Grants; Original Manuscripts by AEE; Published Articles and Reprints by AEE; Published Articles and Reprints by Others.

Series I contains of an assortment of personal items such as address books, calendars, lecture notes, and family photographs. It also includes a lengthy bibliography of Emerson's work and memorials and obituaries at his death in 1976. Series II contains correspondence from 1930-1976. There are incoming and outgoing letters, including a considerable number to his

sister, Gertrude Emerson and her husband, Boshi Sen, who lived in India. A small group of letters of his father, Alfred E. Emerson, Sr., and letters written during Emerson's numerous trips around the world are included.

The third series contains a few files of material related to committees and foundations of which Emerson was a member. Among these are the files on a National Science Foundation grant Emerson received from 1965-1971 for the study of termites. Series IV and Series V contain works written by Alfred E. Emerson. The former includes original manuscripts and the latter, published articles and reprints. Series VI includes articles and reprints by other scholars and scientists.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Special Collections Research Center

University of Chicago. Dept. of Zoology. Records

Warder Clyde Allee Papers

Thomas Park Oral History

Subject Headings

- Emerson, Alfred Edwards, 1896-
- University of Chicago. Dept. of Zoology
- Zoology
- Ecology
- Termites

INVENTORY

Series I: Personal

Series I, Personal, contains memorials and obituaries of Alfred E. Emerson from 1976 and a bibliography of his works from 1917 to 1976. The series contains miscellaneous newspaper and magazine articles, address books, calendars and notebooks as well as a container of index cards containing addresses. This series also includes a small group of lecture notes, some dated as early as 1930 but most undated, and several family photographs.

Box 1

Folder 1-2

Memorials and Obituaries, 1976

Box 1

Folder 3

Bibliography of Alfred E. Emerson, 1917 - 1976

Box 1

Folder 4

Newspaper clippings and magazine articles

Box 1

Folder 5

Investiture ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan New Delhi, 1976

Box 1

Folder 6

Address books (2)

Box 1

Folder 7

Calendars (3), 1957, 1960, 1962

Box 1

Folder 8

Notebook, 1960

Box 1

Folder 9

Public lecture notes, 1930, n.d.

Box 1

Folder 10

Family photographs, clippings, and letters

Box 2

Folder 1

Address Cards

Series II: Correspondence

Series II contains correspondence from 1930 to 1976. The arrangement imposed by Alfred Emerson has been preserved. The correspondence has been grouped, first, by Incoming and Outgoing letters of Alfred E. Emerson. These letters range from 1961 to 1976 with a considerable amount of material to and from his sister, Gertrude (Mrs. Boshi Sen), who was living in India. The next group of correspondence includes the letters of his father, Alfred E. Emerson, Sr. The letters range from 1930 until his death in 1942. The correspondence to follow includes family and financial letters as well as those written during trips Emerson took "around the world" in 1960 and 1962-1963 and during a trip to Japan in 1964.

Box 3

Folder 1

Correspondence, incoming, 1961

Box 3

Folder 2

Correspondence, incoming, 1961 - 1962

Box 3

Folder 3

Correspondence, incoming, 1963 - 1965

Box 3

Folder 4-5

Correspondence, incoming, 1964 - 1975

Box 3

Folder 6

Correspondence, incoming, 1966

Box 3

Folder 7

Correspondence, incoming, 1972 - 1976

Box 3

Folder 8

Correspondence, incoming, 1973 - 1974

Box 3

Folder 9

Correspondence, incoming, 1974 - 1975

Box 4

Folder 1

Correspondence, incoming, 1974-1975

Box 4

Folder 2-3

Correspondence, incoming, 1975

Box 4

Folder 4-6

Correspondence, incoming, 1975 - 1976

Box 4

Folder 7-8

Correspondence, incoming, 1976

Box 4

Folder 9-10

Correspondence, outgoing, to sister Gertrude and her husband Boshi Sen, 1961 - 1970

Box 5

Folder 1-3

Correspondence, outgoing, to sister Gertrude and her husband Boshi Sen, 1961 - 1970

Box 5

Folder 4-5

Correspondence, outgoing, to sister Gertrude, 1972

Box 5

Folder 6

Correspondence, outgoing, to sister Gertrude, 1973

Box 5

Folder 7

Correspondence, outgoing, to sister Gertrude, 1974

Box 6

Folder 1

Correspondence, Alfred E. Emerson, Sr., 1930-1940

Box 6

Folder 2

Correspondence, Alfred E. Emerson, Sr., 1931-1936

Box 6

Folder 3

Correspondence, Alfred E. Emerson, Sr., 1935-1943

Box 6

Folder 4-5

Correspondence, Alfred E. Emerson, Sr., 1936

Box 6

Folder 6

Correspondence, Alfred E. Emerson, Sr., 1937-1941

Box 6

Folder 7

Correspondence, Alfred E. Emerson, Sr., 1938 - 1939

Box 6

Folder 8-9

Correspondence, Alfred E. Emerson, Sr., 1938-1943

Box 6

Folder 10

Correspondence, Alfred E. Emerson, Sr., 1940

Box 6

Folder 11

Correspondence, Alfred E. Emerson, Sr., 1942

Box 7

Folder 1

Correspondence, Emerson family, 1938 - 1941

Box 7

Folder 2

Correspondence, Emerson family, 1938 - 1942

Box 7

Folder 3

Correspondence, Emerson family, 1943 - 1964

Box 7

Folder 4

Correspondence, Emerson family, 1968 - 1976

Box 7

Folder 5-9

Correspondence, Emerson family (Eleanor's death), 1968 - 1972

Box 8

Folder 1-2

Correspondence, Emerson family (AEE's death), 1976

Box 8

Folder 3-4

Correspondence, Emerson family (Medicare), 1965, 1972-1975

Box 8

Folder 5-6

Correspondence, financial, 1965 - 1970

Box 8

Folder 7-8

Correspondence, financial, 1970 - 1976

Box 9

Folder 1-2

Correspondence, Ralph Burhoe, 1963 - 1964

Box 9

Folder 3-4

Correspondence, around the world trip, 1960

Box 9

Folder 5-6

Correspondence, around the world trip, 1962 - 1963

Box 9

Folder 7-9

Correspondence, trip to Japan, 1964

Series III: Committees, Foundations, and Grants

Series III contains newsletters, brochures, and correspondence for several foundations and committees of which Alfred E. Emerson was a member. The Atlantica Foundation maintained and supported scientific and educational institutions including the Atlantica Ecological Research Station in Southern Rhodesia. Emerson was a member of the Belgian American Educational Foundation, an organization that supported technical schools, libraries, individuals, and scientific research. Emerson was also involved with the Committee on Systematics, Evolution, and Environmental Biology at Cornell University. Series III also contains scattered correspondence and articles from 1965 regarding the history of the Society for the Study of Evolution. In addition to papers showing foundation and committee involvement, this series includes a National Science Foundation grant (1965-1971) entitled Taxonomy, Geographical Distribution, Ecology, Social Behavior, and Evolution of Termites.

Box 10

Folder 1

Atlantica Foundation, 1962-1965

Box 10

Folder 2

Belgian American Educational Foundation, 1964-1966

Box 10

Folder 3-6

Committee on Systematics, Evolution, and Environmental Biology, 1964

Box 10

Folder 7

Society for the Study of Evolution documents from Ernst Mayr concerning founding

Box 10

Folder 8-10

National Science Foundation grant, 1962 - 1971

Box 11

Folder 1-4

National Science Foundation grant, 1962 - 1971

Series IV: Original Manuscripts by AEE

Series IV contains articles written by Alfred E. Emerson. These items are the original manuscripts and have been arranged alphabetically by the title of the article. This series also contains a small amount of correspondence regarding Emerson's writings.

Box 11

Folder 5

Article manuscripts and correspondences, 1942 - 1963

Box 11

Folder 6

"The Biological Basis of Social Cooperation"

Box 11

Folder 7-8

"The Biological Foundations of Ethics and Social Progress, "1951

Box 11

Folder 9-10

"Dynamic Homeostasis - A Unifying Principle in Organic, Social, and Ethical Evolution,
"1954

Box 12

Folder 1

"Ecology and Evolution, "1941

Box 12

Folder 2

"Ecology, Evolution, and Society, "1942

Box 12

Folder 3

"Extrapolation from the Biological to the Social, "1945

Box 12

Folder 4

"Five New Genera of Termites from South America and Madagascar"

Box 12

Folder 5

"The Supraorganismic Aspects of the Society"

Box 12

Folder 6

"Taxonomic Categories and Population Genetics, "1944

Box 12

Folder 7

"Termite Studies in the Belgian Congo"

Box 12

Folder 8

"Why Termites?"

Series V: Published Articles and Reprints by AEE

Series V contains published articles and reprints of material written by Alfred E. Emerson. This material has been arranged chronologically according to the date the article was published.

Box 12

Folder 9

"Laboratory Experiments in General Zoology, "1928 - 1929 (with Robert T. Hance) - The University of Pittsburgh

Box 12

Folder 10

"Termitophile Distribution and Quantitative Characters as Indicators of Physiological Speciation in British Guiana Termites (Isoptera), " from Annals of The Entomological Society of America, Vol. 28, No. 3, Sept.1935

Box 12

Folder 11

"The Termite Problem, " reprinted from Natural History, Vol. 39, No. 4, 1937

Box 12

Folder 12

"Termite Nests - A Study of the Phylogeny of Behavior, " April, 1938

Box 12

Folder 13

"Biological Sociology, "1941 - reprinted from Denison University Bulletin, Journal of the Scientific Laboratories, Vol. 36, Dec. 1941

Box 12

Folder 14

"Basic Comparisons of Human and Insect Societies, " Reprinted from Biological Symposia, Vol. VIII, 1942

Box 12

Folder 15

"The Modern Naturalist, " reprint from Transylvania College Bulletin, Vol XV, No.7, Sept.1942

Box 12

Folder 16

"Ecology, Evolution, and Society, "1943

Box 12

Folder 17

"A Key to the Termites of Florida, " reprinted from Entomological News, Vol. LIV, No. 8, Oct.1943

Box 12

Folder 18

"Frank Eugene Lutz, " In Memoriam essay, reprinted from Science, Vol. 99, No. 2569, March 24, 1944

Box 13

Folder 1

Termitidae), " from Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History, Volume 83, Article 7, New York, 1945

Box 13

Folder 2

"Address of the President - 'The Biological Basis of Social Cooperation, ' " 1946, from the journal "Illinois State Academy of Science, vol.39 - when AEE served as president, 1945 - 1946

Box 13

Folder 3

"Five New Genera of Termites from South America and Madagascar (Isoptera, Rhinotermitidae, Termitidae), " from American Museum Novitates, no. 1444, January 4, 1950

Box 13

Folder 4

"The Supraorganic Aspects of the Society, "1952

Box 13

Folder 5

Termitidae), " Tervuren, 1952

Box 13

Folder 6

"The Biological Foundations of Ethics and Social Progress, "1953

Box 13

Folder 7

"The Impact of Darwin on Biology, "1958

Box 13

Folder 8

"Social Insects, " from Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1959

Box 13

Folder 9

"Feedback in Evolution, " article, reprinted from Science, Vol. 129, No.3363, June 12, 1959

Box 13

Folder 10

"Human Cultural Evolution and its Relation to Organic Evolution of Termites, "1960

Box 13

Folder 11

"New Genera of Termites Related to Subulitermes from the Oriental, Malagasy, and Australian Regions (Isoptera, Termitidae, Nasutitermitinae), " from American Museum Novitates, 1960

Box 13

Folder 12

"Report on a Collecting Trip to the Tropical Orient for Taxonomic and Ecological Study of Termites Sept. - NSF grant - GS 3509. NSF 14014", Oct.1960

Box 13

Folder 13

"Intellectual Cooperation among Natural Scientists, "1960

Box 13

Folder 14

"The Impact of the Theory of Evolution on Religion, "1960

Box 13

Folder 15

"New Genera on the Subulitermes branch of the Nasutitermitinae from the Ethiopian Region (Isoptera, Termitidae), " from American Museum Novitates, No. 1987, March 1960

Box 13

Folder 16

"Six New Genera of Termitinae from the Belgian Congo (Isoptera, Termitidae), " from American Museum Novitates, No. 1988, March 1960

Box 13

Folder 17

"Taxonomy, " with Karl Patterson Schmidt, from Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1960

Box 13

Folder 18

Book Review of "Principles of Animal Taxonomy, by George Gaylord Simpson, " reprinted from Science, May 19, 1961

Box 13

Folder 19

"Vestigial Characters of Termites and Processes of Regressive Evolution, " Reprinted from Evolution, Vol. XV, No. 2, June, 1961

Box 13

Folder 20

"Vestigial Characters, Regressive Evolution, and Recapitulation Among Termites, "1962

Box 13

Folder 21

"The Impact of Darwin on Biology, " reprinted from Acta Biotheoretica, Vol XV, Pars IV, 1962

Box 13

Folder 22

"New Species of the Genus Glyptotermes Froggatt from the Papuan, Oriental, Ethiopian, and Neotropical Regions (Isoptera, Kalotermitidae), " from American museum Novitates, no. 2089, June 1962

Box 13

Folder 23

"Research Opportunities for American Biologists in Japan, " - A report on a visit to Japan, 1964 (with Lynn Throckmorton)

Box 13

Folder 24

"Interim Report on Accomplishments under NSF Grant G-5146, "1965

Box 13

Folder 25

"Final Report on Accomplishments under NSF Grant G-25146, Oct. 1, 1962 - November 1, 1965," 1965

Box 13

Folder 26

"Commentary on Theological Resources from the Biological Sciences, " reprinted from Zygon, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1966

Box 13

Folder 27

A Unifying Principle in Organic, Social, and Ethical Evolution, " reprinted from Zygon, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1968

Box 13

Folder 28

"Annual Progress Report on the 'Taxonomy, Geographical Distribution, Ecology, Social Behavior, and Evolution of Termites, '" - National Science Foundation Grant, GB-4405X, 1968

Box 14

Folder 1

" Tertiary Fossil Species of the Rhinotermitidae (Isoptera), Phylogeny of Genera, and Reciprocal Phylogeny of Associated Flagellata (Protozoa) and the Staphylinidae (Coleoptera), " from the Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History, Volume 146, Article 3, New York, 1971

Box 14

Folder 2

"Some Biological Antecedents of Human Purpose, " from Zygon, vol. 8, nos. 3-4, Sept. - Dec.1973

Box 14

Folder 3

"Evolutionary Aspects of Freedom, Death, and Dignity, " (with Ralph Burhoe), from Zygon, vol. 9, no. 2, June 1974

Series VI: Published Articles and Reprints by Others

Series VI contains articles that were written by others. These articles have been arranged chronologically according to the date they were published.

Box 14

Folder 4

"Five Years of Farm and Home Development in Wisconsin, "June 1961

Box 14

Folder 5

Hermann J. Müller reprints, 1963-1964

Box 14

Folder 6

"Three New Species of Termites from Israel (Termitidae Amitermitinae), " from Israel Journal of Zoology, Vol. 13, 1964

Box 14

Folder 7

"Sociologia Ruralis, " Vol. 5, No. 4, 1965

Box 14

Folder 8

"Aspirations, Work Roles, and Decision Making Patterns, "April 1966

Box 14

Folder 9

"International Wives, "April 1966

Box 14

Folder 10

Behavioral Science, Volume 21, Number 5, Sept.1976

Box 14

Folder 11

Newsletter, Vol.2. Number 2 and 3, April 1976, June 1976