

University of Chicago Library

Guide to the Harvey B. Plotnick Collection of the History of Quantum Mechanics and the Theory of Relativity 1911-1995



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.PLOTNICK
Title	Plotnick, Harvey B. Collection of the History of Quantum Mechanics and the Theory of Relativity
Date	1911-1995
Size	1 linear ft. (2 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract	This collection contains documents concerning the history of quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity. The manuscripts consist mainly of drafts of papers and lecture notes, correspondence, class notes, and syllabi. They span the period from 1911-1995.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Plotnick, Harvey B. Collection of the History of Quantum Mechanics and the Theory of Relativity, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

Harvey Plotnick was born in Chicago. He graduated from the University of Chicago in 1963 with a Bachelor's degree in Literature. In 1967, Plotnick founded and became President and Chief Executive Officer of Contemporary Books, Inc., a publisher of nonfiction trade books. The company became one of the nation's largest publishers of adult basic-education instructional materials. Several memoirs and fictions, including Loretta Lynn's *Coal Miner's Daughter* and *Sybil*, the story of a woman with multiple personalities, have also been published by Contemporary Books Inc. The company was acquired by the Tribune Company in 1993, and then became part of McGraw-Hill Company. Plotnick was made chief executive officer responsible for educational publishing activities in the Tribune Company. Plotnick's book of his own poems, *Notes of a Refugee*, was published by Mellen Poetry Press in 1992.

Plotnick was also an active alum of the University of Chicago. He served on the Alumni Award committee from 1991-1992 and joined the University's Board of Trustees in 1994. Since

then, he has chaired a number of its major fundraising campaigns, including the \$650 million Campaign for the Next Century, which ended in 1996. He chairs the College and Student Activities Visiting Committee and has been a member of the Alumni Association's Board of Governors and Chair of the College Visiting Committee. He and his wife endowed the Elizabeth and Harvey Plotnick Scholarship fund for undergraduate students, as well as a fund for graduate students in the Physical Sciences at the University.

Plotnick's interests also extend to the physical sciences. He became a member of Argonne's Board of Governors in 2001 and for decades collected rare, first-edition books on physics, as well as master drawings and prints. He and his wife, Elizabeth, live in Chicago and have four children.

Scope Note

This collection contains documents concerning the history of quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity. They were first collected as part of the Harvey Plotnick Library, the first extensive library of manuscripts and printed documents formed by a private collector on the development of quantum physics and the theory of relativity. The library was intended to document the development of quantum physics and relativity theory through manuscripts, letters, and original printings of the highest historical value through their documentation of the actual practice of science.

The manuscripts consist mainly of drafts of papers and lecture notes, correspondence, class notes, and syllabi gathered from scientists' papers. They span the period from 1911-1995.

Many of the items contain handwritten notes and autographs by notable scientists. One set of the class notes was taken in a 1939 course on Quantum Mechanics taught by Robert J. Oppenheimer, a physicist who worked on the Manhattan Project. The collection also contains three early papers by Arnold Sommerfeld (1868-1951), professor of mathematics and theoretical physics at Göttingen, Clausthal, Aachen, and Munich.

Related Resources

Browse finding aids by topic.

Subject Headings

- Energy Levels (Quantum Mechanics)
- History of Science
- Nuclear Physics
- Physics
- Physics -- Philosophy
- Quantum Field Theory
- Quantum Theory
- Quantum Theory -- History

- Relativity (Physics)
- Relativity (Physics) -- History
- Science

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Brogie, Maurice de, " La relation $h\nu=E$ dans les phénomènes photo-electriques; production de la lumière dans le choc des atomes par les electrons et production des rayons de Röntgen," carbon typescript, [ca. 1920-1921] (number 47 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 2

Chadwick, James, to Käthe Janssen, autograph letter with autograph postcard, Cambridge, June 7, 1972 (number 51 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 3

Davisson, C. J., to L. W. McKeehan, typed letter signed, New York, December 28, 1937 (number 201 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 4

Gamow, George, to Samuel A. Goudsmit, autograph letter signed, Copenhagen, March 8, 1934 (number 115 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 5

Grosse, Aristid V., Nier, Alfred O.C., Dunning, John R., Booth, E.T., Weil, George L., and Blizard, Everitt P. "A Collection of Documents Detailing the Experiments and Ultimate Construction of a Nuclear Reactor, including the Discovery Document for a Patent Application for a Nuclear Pile Produced by the Uranium Committee of Columbia University, dated Nov. 2 1940."

Box 1

Folder 6

Herzberg, Gerhard, "Absorption Spectrum of SiH in the Vacuum Ultraviolet:" handwritten manuscript with letter fro Herzberg to K. Geyer, November 15, 1973 (number 132 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 7

Jordan, Pascual, "About this Report. The Theory of Skew Lattices...:" handwritten and typescript manuscript, [ca. 1961] (number 141 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 8

Kastler, Alfred, "Optical Methods of Radiofrequency Spectroscopy:" handwritten manuscript and letters, September 1968-May 19, 1969 (number 142 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 9

Laue, Max von, to Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, typed letter signed, Berlin June 4, 1943; Weizsäcker, Carl Friedrich, to Max von Laue, carbon copy signed, June 2, 1943 (number 152 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 10

Mott, Nevill Francis, to J. Northbutt, typed letter signed, Cambridge, March 30, 1979; also, "Polaron Book:" handwritten manuscript, October 20, 1995, with autograph letter signed to Ursula Esse, December 13, 1995 (number 201 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 11

[Mulliken, Robert], Schiff, Leonard, Quantum Mechanics (New York: McGraw Hill, 1949):

Box 1

Folder 12

Notes by Mulliken and 6 pages of handwritten notes by Mulliken re Quantum Mechanics, as well as review and McGraw-Hill advertisement (number 180 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 13

[Oppenheimer, J. Robert], Peters, Bernard, "Notes on Quantum Mechanics:" mimeograph typescript of notes from Oppenheimer course at Berkeley, 1939 (number 187 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 14

Penzias, Arno: handwritten incomplete draft of article on electromagnetism, November 1990 (number 201 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 15

Penzias, Arno Allan, "Primordial Deuterium in the Universe:" handwritten and typescript draft, [ca. 1979]; "On the Relative Abundances of silicon isotopes in the Interstellar Medium:" 2 drafts, handwritten and corrected typescript; "The Origin of the Elements:" signed offprint from Science 205 (1979) (number 197 in Christie's catalog)

Box 1

Folder 16

Serber, Robert, "Serber says: About Mesotrons. -- Serber says: About High Energy Processes and Nuclear Forces:" mimeograph typescript, [1947] (number 239 in Christie's catalog)

Box 2

Folder 1

Sommerfeld, Arnold, letters and postcards to Richard von Mises (2 letters with envelopes, 3 postcards, 1 signed visiting card), 1911-1939 (number 250 in Christie's catalog)

Box 2

Folder 2

Sommerfeld, Arnold, "Vorlesungen über partielle Differentialgleichungen der mathematischen Physik:" typescript manuscript with handwritten equations and corrections, 1896/7 (number 249 in Christie's catalog)

Box 2

Folder 3

Sommerfeld, Arnold and Edwin Schottland: 1-4 of 7 handwritten notebooks with notes and diagrams taken by Schottland during 3 of Sommerfeld's advanced physics courses (some loose pieces), 1930-1931 (number 251 in Christie's catalog)

Box 2

Folder 4

Sommerfeld, Arnold and Edwin Schottland: 5-7 of 7 handwritten notebooks with notes and diagrams taken by Schottland during 3 of Sommerfeld's advanced physics courses (some loose pieces), 1930-1931 (number 251 in Christie's catalog)

Box 2

Folder 5

Villars, Felix M. H., "Quantum Theory: Lecture Notes for a Course Given by Professor F. Villars at MIT during 1952-1953," prepared by A. E. Glassgold: mimeographed typescript syllabus, [1952] (number 276 in Christie's catalog)

Box 2

Folder 6

Zieman, Pieter, "Stralingsverschijnselen dictaat van Prof. Dr. P. Zeeman:" bound carbon typescript, 1914-1915 (number 289 in Christie's catalog)

Box 2

Folder 7

Plotnick MSS: Miscellaneous

Box 2

Folder 8

Sommerfeld/Schottland Loose Items