

John Von Neumann

A Register of His Papers in the Library of Congress

**Prepared by Margit Kerwin and Patrick Kerwin
Revised and expanded by Patrick Kerwin**



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

2002

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Latest revision: 2005-03-17

Collection Summary

Title: Papers of John Von Neumann

Span Dates: 1912-1996

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1935-1957)

ID No.: MSS44180

Creator: Von Neumann, John, 1903-1957

Extent: 11,660 items; 34 containers; 13.4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English and Hungarian

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Mathematician, atomic energy commissioner, and educator. Correspondence, memoranda, journals, speeches, article and book drafts, notes, charts, graphs, patent, biographical material, family papers, and other material pertaining primarily to John Von Neumann's career as professor of mathematics at the Institute for Advanced Study; adviser and commissioner on the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission; scientific consultant to government and private concerns; and author of works on ballistic research, computers, continuous geometries, logic, operator theory, quantum mechanics, and the theory of games.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Names:

Von Neumann, John, 1903-1957

Aldor, Eva

Aldor, Peter, 1904-1976

Aydelotte, Frank, 1880-1956

Bethe, Hans Albrecht, 1906-

Birkhoff, Garrett, 1911-

Chandrasekhar, S. (Subrahmanyan), 1910-

Dantzig, George Bernard, 1914-

Dirac, P. A. M. (Paul Adrien Maurice), 1902-

Eckart, Carl, 1902-

Einstein, Albert, 1879-1955

Fermi, Enrico, 1901-1954

Flexner, Abraham, 1866-1959

Gamow, George, 1904-1968

Gödel, Kurt

Goldstine, Herman Heine, 1913-

Halmos, Paul R. (Paul Richard), 1916-

Heisenberg, Werner, 1901-1976

Hove, L. van (Léon)

Hurd, Cuthbert Corwin, 1911-

Jordan, Pascual, 1902-

Kent, R. H. (Robert Harrington), 1886-1961

Kistiakowsky, George B. (George Bogdan), 1900-

Morgenstern, Oskar, 1902-

Oppenheimer, J. Robert, 1904-1967

Ortvay, Rudolf, 1885-1945

Pauli, Wolfgang, 1900-1958

Stone, Marshall H. (Marshall Harvey), 1903-

Strauss, Lewis L.

Taub, Abraham Haskel, 1911-

Teller, Edward, 1908-

Ulam, Stanislaw M.
Veblen, Oswald, 1880-1960
Von Neumann, Klara Dan
Weaver, Warren, 1894-
Weyl, Hermann, 1885-1955
Wiener, Norbert, 1894-1964
Wigner, Eugene Paul, 1902-
Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton, N.J.)--Faculty
Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory
U.S. Army Ballistic Research Laboratory
U.S. Atomic Energy Commission

Subjects:

Ballistics
Computers
Continuous geometries
Game theory
Logic, Symbolic and mathematical
Mathematics--Study and teaching
Nuclear energy
Nuclear energy--Government policy--United States
Operator theory
Physics
Quantum theory

Occupations:

Atomic energy commissioners
Educators
Mathematicians

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The papers of John Von Neumann, educator, mathematician, consultant, and atomic energy commissioner, were given to the Library of Congress in 1974-1975 by his daughter Marina Von Neumann Whitman. Additions were received in 1993 from brother Nicholas A. Vonneuman, 1998 from Israel Halperin, and 2001 from William McClelland.

Processing History:

The papers of John Von Neumann were arranged and described in 1992. Additions were made to the collection in 1993 and 2002.

Transfers:

A video recording has been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division of the Library of Congress, where it is identified as part of these papers.

Copyright Status:

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of John Von Neumann is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Preferred Citation:

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, John Von Neumann Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Event</i> |
|---------------|--|
| 1903, Dec. 28 | Born, Budapest, Hungary |
| 1926 | Ph.D., University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary |
| 1929 | Married Mariette Kovesi (divorced 1937) |
| 1930 | Immigrated to United States |
| 1930-1933 | Visiting professor, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J. |
| 1932 | Published <i>Mathematische Grundlagen der Quantenmechanik</i> . Berlin: J. Springer |
| 1933-1957 | Research professor of mathematics, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N.J. |
| 1937 | Naturalized United States citizen |
| 1939 | Married Klara Dan |
| 1940-1957 | Member, Scientific Advisory Committee, Ballistic Research Laboratory, Aberdeen, Md. |
| 1943-1955 | Consultant, Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, Los Alamos, N.Mex. |
| 1944 | Published <i>Theory of Games and Economic Behavior</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press |
| 1952-1954 | Member, General Advisory Committee, United States Atomic Energy Commission |
| 1955-1957 | Commissioner, United States Atomic Energy Commission |
| 1957, Feb. 8 | Died, Washington, D.C. |

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Von Neumann (1903-1957) span the years 1926-1996, with the bulk of the items concentrated in the period from 1935 to 1957. The papers pertain primarily to Von Neumann's career in the United States after he emigrated from Hungary to the United States in 1930. They feature his career as professor of mathematics at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, 1933-1957, adviser and commissioner on the United States Atomic Energy Commission, 1952-1957, scientific consultant with various government and private concerns, and author of works on various scientific topics. The collection consists of correspondence, memoranda, journals, speeches, articles and book drafts, notes, charts, graphs, family papers, clippings, printed matter, photographs, and other materials.

The [Family Papers](#) series consists chiefly of correspondence between John Von Neumann and family members. Of particular significance is the extensive correspondence between Von Neumann and his wife Klara Dan Von Neumann concerning professional and family matters.

The [General Correspondence](#) series contains Von Neumann's incoming and outgoing correspondence with his colleagues at the Institute for Advanced Study, the Atomic Energy Commission and other government bodies, including the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, and various universities. Of special interest are an Albert Einstein letter and report on theoretical physics, 1937. Other correspondents include Frank Aydelotte, Hans Albrecht Bethe, Garrett Birkhoff, S. Chandrasekhar, George Bernard Dantzig, P. A. M. Dirac, Carl Eckart, Enrico Fermi, Abraham Flexner, George Gamow, Kurt Gödel, Herman Heine

Goldstine, Werner Heisenberg, L. van Hove, Cuthbert Hurd, Pascual Jordan, R. H. Kent, George B. Kistiakowsky, Oskar Morgenstern, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Rudolf Ortway, Wolfgang Pauli, Marshall H. Stone, Lewis L. Strauss, Abraham Haskel Taub, Edward Teller, Stanislaw M. Ulam, Oswald Veblen, Warren Weaver, Hermann Weyl, Norbert Wiener, and Eugene Paul Wigner.

The [Subject File](#) documents all facets of Von Neumann's career in the United States, reflecting his role in early computer and atomic research. The bulk of the series pertains to his work at the Institute for Advanced Study, including his tenure as director of the Electronic Computer Project. Other papers document Von Neumann's many consultantships. Of particular interest are files relating to his work at the United States Army Ballistic Research Laboratory in Aberdeen, Maryland.

The [Speeches and Writings File](#) reflects Von Neumann's interest in numerous scientific and mathematical subjects. The series includes his early writings in quantum mechanics and logic, his writings on continuous geometries, operator theory, ballistic research, and his later works concerning computers. Also of note is his pioneering work on the theory of games. Throughout the Speeches and Writings File are evaluations of Von Neumann's work written after his death by his colleagues. Among the reviewers were Herman Heine Goldstine, Paul R. Halmos, and Abraham Haskel Taub.

An [Addition](#) to the papers consists of correspondence between Von Neumann and Eva Aldor, other material relating to Eva and Peter Aldor, correspondence relating to the Poiseuille-type laminar flow, biographical material, a patent, photographs, and printed matter.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in five series:

- [Family Papers, 1929-1956, n.d.](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1930-1959, n.d.](#)
- [Subject File, 1930-1974, n.d.](#)
- [Speeches and Writings File, 1926-1960, n.d.](#)
- [Addition, 1912-1996, n.d.](#)

Description of Series

| <i>Container</i> | <i>Series</i> |
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| BOX 1 | <u>Family Papers, 1929-1956, n.d.</u> Correspondence, telegrams, official documents, and other papers. Arranged alphabetically. |
| BOX 2-8 | <u>General Correspondence, 1930-1959, n.d.</u> Correspondence and attached material with friends and colleagues. Arranged alphabetically by name of person or institution. |
| BOX 8-19 | <u>Subject File, 1930-1974, n.d.</u> Correspondence, telegrams, memoranda, journals, logs, tests, travel orders, invitations, charts, graphs, forms, biographical data, photographs, clippings and other printed matter, and miscellaneous material. Organized by name of person or organization, topic, or type of material. |
| BOX 19-33 | <u>Speeches and Writings File, 1928-1960, n.d.</u> Correspondence, speeches, articles, book drafts, notes, contracts, clippings, and printed matter. Speeches have been separated from other writings, which are first arranged alphabetically by type (articles, books, reports, and miscellaneous) and therein alphabetically by type of material, subject, or title. |
| BOX 34 | <u>Addition, 1912-1996, n.d.</u> Correspondence, biographical data, patents, photographs, a report, printed matter, and an index. Arranged by year of addition and therein alphabetically by name of person or type of material. |

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| BOX 2-8 | General Correspondence, 1930-1959, n.d. Correspondence and attached material with friends and colleagues. Arranged alphabetically by name of person or institution. |
| BOX 2 | Aldor, Peter, 1946-1954, n.d. Alexandroff, Paul, 1935 Aydelotte, Frank, 1940-1945, 1956 "A" miscellaneous, 1933-1956, n.d. Bay, Zoltan L., 1945-1954 Bethe, Hans Albrecht, 1941-1945, 1953-1956 Bigelow, Julian, 1947-1956 Birkhoff, Garrett, 1935-1956, n.d. Blake, Gwen, 1934-1942 Bohr, Niels, 1951 Bonhoeffer, Karl Fredrich, 1949, n.d. Bush, Vannevar, 1949-1950 "B" miscellaneous, 1926-1956, n.d. (2 folders) Calkin, John, 1941-1945, 1955-1956 Chandrasekhar, S. (Subrahmanyam), 1935-1942, 1950-1956 |
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| BOX 4 | Goldstine, Herman H., 1944-1956, n.d. “G” miscellaneous, 1937-1956 Halperin, Israel, 1936-1940, 1946-1952 Harrison, George R., 1945, 1956 Heisenberg, Werner, 1950 Hove, L. van (Léon), 1950 Hurd, Cuthbert C., 1948-1958, n.d. “H” miscellaneous, 1933-1948, 1955-1956 “I” miscellaneous, 1935-1951 Jordan, Pascual, 1937, n.d. “J” miscellaneous, 1941, 1948-1956 Kakutani, Shizuo, 1942-1955, n.d. |
| BOX 5 | Kent, R. H. (Robert Harrington), 1938-1956 Kistiakowsky, George B., 1942-1949 Koopmans, Tjalling Charles, 1945-1946, 1959 Kuhn, Harold, 1949-1953 “K” miscellaneous, 1939-1956 Leutert, Werner, 1950-1951 Loewner, Charles, 1943-1947 Lorch, Edgar, 1946-1947, 1958 “L” miscellaneous, 1933-1956, n.d. Mayer, Joseph E., 1950 Monteiro, Antonio, 1941-1942 Montgomery, Deane, 1955-1956 Morgenstern, Oskar, 1940, 1949-1956 “M” miscellaneous, 1935-1956, n.d. (2 folders) Newman, Max H. A., 1946, n.d. |

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| | Armed Forces Special Weapons Project |
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| | Consulting and travel, 1951-1954 |
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| | Shock waves, 1952 |
| | Army Advisory Committee on Mathematics, 1947-1948 |
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| BOX 31 | (4 folders) <i>Mathematical Reviews</i> , 1948 Notes 1934-1944 (5 folders) Undated (6 folders) |
| BOX 32 | (15 folders) Petroleum company writings, 1948-1959, n.d. Philosophical Society of Washington, D.C., 1945-1946 Princeton University Press, 1948-1957 |
| BOX 33 | Publications, list of, 1955-1960, n.d. Reviews, 1937 Yale University, New Haven, Conn., 1954 Unidentified, n.d. Reports 1946 "Preliminary Discussion of the Logical Design of an Electronic Computing Instrument" 1948 Congressional reapportionment |

Speeches and Writings File, 1928-1960, n.d.

Container

Contents

"Planning and Coding of Problems for an Electronic Computing Instrument"

(3 folders)

1949

"Recent Theories of Turbulence"

1953

"An Analysis of the Linear Displacement of Oil by Gas-Driven Solvent"

Undated

Shock waves (incomplete)

BOX 34

Addition, 1912-1996, n.d.

Correspondence, biographical data, patents, photographs, a report, printed matter, and an index. Arranged by year of addition and therein alphabetically by name of person or type of material.

BOX 34

1993 addition

Index to addition, 1993

Aldor, Peter and Eva, 1949-1989

Biographical material, 1991-1992

Family tree, n.d.

Patent, 1957

Photographs, 1912-1983, n.d.

Printed matter, 1946-1955, 1971

2002 addition

Miscellany, 1948, 1957, 1996