Collection Summary

Title: Papers of Wernher Von Braun
Span Dates: 1796-1970
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1950-1970)
ID No.: MSS44172
Creator: Von Braun, Wernher, 1912-1977
Extent: 20,000 items; 56 containers plus 5 oversize; 22.8 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English and German
Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Abstract: German aerospace engineer. Correspondence, fan mail, speeches and writings, public relations material, subject files, scrapbooks, and printed material. The papers relate to Wernher Von Braun's career in rocketry and aerospace engineering from his early work on the V-2 rocket in Germany to his work for the United States Department of Defense, the Redstone Arsenal, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration George C. Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala.

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 Braun, Wernher, 1912-1977
Bechtle, Otto Wolfgang--Correspondence
Brucker, Wilber Marion, 1894-1968--Correspondence
Durant, Frederick C., 1916--Correspondence
Gartmann, Heinz, 1917--Correspondence
Gerhards, Jupps--Correspondence
Grosse, Aristid von, 1905--Correspondence
Kölle, Heinz Hermann, 1917--Correspondence
Ley, Willy, 1906-1969--Correspondence
Loeser, G.--Correspondence
Medaris, John B. (John Bruce), 1902--Correspondence
Ryan, Cornelius--Correspondence
Sikorsky, Igor Ivan, 1889-1972--Correspondence
Sparkman, John, 1899-1985--Correspondence
Stuhlinger, Ernst, 1913--Correspondence
Truax, Robert Collins, 1917--Correspondence
Watkins, Armitage, 1906--Correspondence
Whipple, Fred Lawrence, 1906--Correspondence
United States. Dept. of Defense
United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration
American Rocket Society
General Dynamics Corporation
General Motors Corporation
George C. Marshall Space Flight Center
Gesellschaft für Weltraumsforschung
International Business Machines Corporation
Lockheed Aircraft Corporation
Project Apollo (U.S.)
Project Gemini (U.S.)
Project Mercury (U.S.)
Sperry Rand Corporation

Subjects:
Aeronautics
Guided missiles
Rocketry--Germany
Rocketry--United States
Rockets (Aeronautics)
Space flight
V-2 rocket
World War, 1939-1945--Aerial operations, German
Redstone Arsenal (Ala.)

Occupations:
Aerospace engineers
Public officials

Administrative Information

Provenance:
The papers of Wernher Von Braun, engineer, rocket scientist, and space program administrator, were given to the Library of Congress by Von Braun between 1962 and 1971. Additional papers were deposited in the Library by Von Braun in 1971; the deposit was converted to a gift by his widow, Maria Von Braun, in 1997.

Transfers:
Items have been transferred from the Manuscript Division to other custodial divisions of the Library. Photographs have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. Tapes have been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the Wernher Von Braun Papers.

Copyright Status:
Copyright in the unpublished writings of Wernher Von Braun in these papers and in other collections of papers in the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

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

Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1912, Mar. 23</td>
<td>Born, Wirsitz, East Prussia (now part of Poland)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1930          | Assistant to Hermann Oberth, experimenting with small liquid rocket motors
                | Founding member, Rocket Field, Berlin, Germany, sponsored and financed by German Rocket Society |
| 1931          | Student, Institute of Technology, Zurich, Switzerland                 |
| 1932          | B.S., Institute of Technology, Berlin, Germany                        |
| 1932-1937     | Chief, Testing Station, German Army Proving Ground, Kummersdorf, Germany |
| 1934          | Ph. D., University of Berlin, Berlin, Germany                         |
1937-1945  Technical director, German Rocket Research Center, Peenemünde, Germany
Responsible for V-2 Long-range Rocket and A.A. Guided Missile Wasserfall

1943-1945  Research professor, Peenemünde, Germany

1945  Captured by U.S. Army and taken to United States

Project director, Research and Development Service, U.S. Army Ordnance Corps, Fort Bliss, Tex.

1947  Married Maria Von Quistorp

1950-1956  Chief, Guided Missile Development Division, Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, Ala.

1953  Published *The Mars Project* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 91 pp.), translated by Henry J. White
Published *Man on the Moon* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson. 134 pp.), with Fred L. Whipple and Willy Ley. Also published as *Conquest of the Moon* (New York: Viking Press. 126 pp.)

1955  Naturalized as American citizen

1956  Published *The Exploration of Mars* (New York: Viking Press. 176 pp.), with Willy Ley


1957  Received Distinguished Civilian Service Award, Department of Defense

1958  Received Dr. Robert Goddard Memorial Trophy

1960  Published *First Men to the Moon* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 96 pp.)

1960-1970  Director, George C. Marshall Space Flight Center, National Aeronautic and Space Administration, Huntsville, Ala.

1967  Published *History of Rocketry & Space Travel* (New York: Crowell. 244 pp.), with Frederick I. Ordway III
Published *Space Frontier* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 216 pp.)

1970-1972  Deputy Associate Administrator for Planning, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Washington, D.C.

1972  Vice president, Engineering and Development, Fairchild Industries, Germantown, Md.

1975  Founded National Space Institute


**Scope and Content Note**

The papers of Wernher Von Braun (1912-1977) span the years 1796 to 1970, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the decades 1950 to 1970. A few items in the collection predate Von Braun's emigration to the United States and his postwar
duties with the United States Army as part of the “Paperclip” project, but most of the papers relate to his work at the Redstone Arsenal and the George C. Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Alabama. Consisting largely of office files and fan letters, the collection includes extensive public relations matter, general correspondence, an invitation file, subject files, speeches and writings, and miscellaneous printed matter. Nearly half of the papers consist of fan mail, some of it topical and scientific correspondence requiring original replies by staff members, but more of it from autograph seekers and admirers who were especially prolific following major space accomplishments. Also in the collection are bound volumes of photocopies of Von Braun's scrapbooks, 1930 to 1958, which treat the evolution of rocketry from the perspective of his V-2 research for Nazi Germany and his guided missile work for the United States Army after World War II.

Born in Wirsitz, East Prussia, in 1912, Wernher Von Braun early became interested in rocketry and pursued studies at the Berlin Technical Institute and the University of Berlin which prepared him for his career. His success as a rocket expert coincided with the technological outburst of the World War II period and the space and arms developments in the postwar period. These papers emphasize Von Braun's scientific contributions to the United States space program as well as focusing on his role as a spokesman for space exploration in competition with the Soviet Union. They portray his association with the American Rocket Society and the Gellschaft für Weltraumsforschung, his duties as chief of Guided Missile Development at Huntsville, and his directorship of NASA's Marshall Flight Center. The files most reflective of Von Braun's official responsibilities are the subject files and the general correspondence, which include letters, notes, memoranda, and such related material as technical reports, drawings, charts, and personnel forms.

Von Braun was an early advocate of space conquest and exploration whose views were carried by popular weeklies and the daily press years before the success of Sputnik imparted greater urgency to a stepped-up American space effort. Two files of more than usual interest are the subject files regarding Congress and space, and a folder entitled “A. V. Grosse Action” which contains responses to Grosse's plan for the launching of an American satellite in the mid-1950s. Also of significance are speeches which Von Braun gave before scientific, business, and other organizations. These speeches delineate his projections and later his reminiscences of the development of space science. Other important papers include manuscripts of some of Von Braun's books, his correspondence with German and American publishers, his exchanges with such former German rocket specialists as Herman Oberth, and his correspondence and memoranda concerning the major American space shots from the Explorer firings to Apollo 11.

Von Braun moved from Alabama to NASA headquarters in Washington shortly after the 1969 moon landing, and in 1972 he left government service for private industry. The latter facets of his career are not covered by the papers in this collection. Absent also are family papers and primary documentation of his work on the V-2 and his capture and impressment into the service of the United States Army.


Von Braun had considerable correspondence with leaders in the aerospace industry, including Aerojet General Corporation, Lockheed, General Dynamics, General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Sperry-Rand, Douglas Aircraft, General Electric, Northrop Corporation, and International Business Machines. The bulk of the letters and memoranda, however are from NASA headquarters in Washington and from Marshall Space Flight Center.

Appended to the collection is an addition which consists mostly of speeches from the mid-1960s and fan mail from the Apollo 11 mission.

Related Material

A substantial collection of Von Braun papers is also located at the U. S. Space and Rocket Center, Huntsville, Alabama.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in seven series:
• General Correspondence, 1950-1969
• Invitation File, 1952-1967
• Public Relations Correspondence, 1952-1969
• Subject File, 1949-1968
• Speeches and Writings, 1934-1969
• Miscellany, 1796-1968
• Addition, 1913-1970, n.d.
Description of Series

Container | Series | Notes
---|---|---
BOX 1-12 | General Correspondence, 1950-1969 | Letters, memoranda, and notes sent and received, with related matter such as enclosed technical reports, photographs, charts, drawings, and personnel forms. Organized chronologically by year and alphabetically therein by topic, name of person, or organization.


BOX 40-45 | Subject File, 1949-1968 | Subject correspondence sent and received; organizational minutes, reports, and printed matter; personnel forms; bibliographies; notes; and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically according to subject matter and chronologically therein.

BOX 46-52 | Speeches and Writings, 1934-1969 | Handwritten, typewritten, near-print, printed, and photocopies of speeches and writings by Von Braun and others. Arranged chronologically, with longer and undated book and article drafts placed alphabetically by title near the end of the series, followed by speeches and writings by others arranged chronologically.

BOX 52-57 | Miscellany, 1796-1968 | Assorted vellum diplomas, loose clippings, and photocopies of Von Braun's scrapbooks. Clippings chronologically arranged by year; scrapbooks arranged in rough chronological sequence.

BOX 58-60 | Public Relations Correspondence, 1963-1970 | Autograph requests and congratulatory letters, mostly pertaining to the Apollo 11 mission. Arranged by year with additional distinctions between autograph requests, congratulatory letters, and foreign-language letters.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX 60-61</th>
<th><strong>Subject File, 1959-1969</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personnel files, thank-you letters sent to <em>Apollo 11</em> team members, and photocopies of correspondence and related matter concerning the House Committee on Science and Astronautics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arranged alphabetically by title of subject.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>BOX 61</th>
<th><strong>Speeches and Writings, 1950-1970, n.d.</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Handwritten drafts and near-print and photocopies of speeches by Von Braun.</td>
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<td>Arranged chronologically.</td>
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<th>BOX 61</th>
<th><strong>Miscellany, 1913-1967</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellaneous printed matter.</td>
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<td>Arranged chronologically.</td>
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## Container List

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<td>Letters, memoranda, and notes sent and received, with related matter such as enclosed technical reports, photographs, charts, drawings, and personnel forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organized chronologically by year and alphabetically therein by topic, name of person, or organization.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A-G</td>
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<td>A-B</td>
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<td>BOX 7</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>A-C</td>
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<td>BOX 8</td>
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## General Correspondence, 1950-1969

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<td></td>
<td>A-K</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(5 folders)</td>
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<td>BOX 10</td>
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<td>1964, A-Z</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1965</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A-G</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 11</td>
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<td>BOX 12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1968, A-Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1969, A-Z</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Invitation File, 1952-1967

Letters of invitation received, with replies. Arranged chronologically.

| BOX 12  | 1952-1957 |
|         | (4 folders) |
| BOX 13  | 1958-1967 |
|         | (8 folders) |

### Public Relations Correspondence, 1952-1969

#### Set A, 1952-1958

Fan mail and public correspondence. Organized chronologically by month.

<p>| BOX 14 | 1952-Oct. 1954 |
|        | (10 folders) |
| BOX 15 | Nov. 1954-Apr. 1956 |
|        | (11 folders) |
| BOX 16 | May 1956-Nov. 1957 |
|        | (9 folders) |
| BOX 17 | Nov.-Dec. 1957 |
|        | (6 folders) |
| BOX 18 | Dec. 1957-Feb. 1958 |
|        | (6 folders) |
| BOX 19 | Feb.-Sept. 1958 |
|        | (7 folders) |</p>
<table>
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<th>Container</th>
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</table>
| BOX 20    | Oct.-Dec. 1958  
(2 folders) |
| BOX 20-39 | **Set B, 1958-1967**  
Fan mail and public correspondence.  
Organized chronologically by year and alphabetically by name of correspondent therein. |
| BOX 20    | 1958  
A-Cl  
(5 folders) |
| BOX 21    | D-Gz  
(8 folders) |
| BOX 22    | H-Le  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 23    | Lf-Q  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 24    | R-Tz  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 25    | U-Z  
(5 folders) |
| BOX 26    | 1959  
A-D  
(4 folders) |
| BOX 27    | E-Q  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 27    | R-Z  
(3 folders) |
| BOX 28    | 1960  
A-Cl  
(5 folders) |
| BOX 29    | Cm-I  
(9 folders) |
| BOX 30    | J-N  
(9 folders) |
| BOX 30    | O-Sz  
(9 folders) |
| BOX 31    | T-Z  
(5 folders) |
| BOX 31    | 1961  
A-C  
(3 folders) |
| BOX 32    | D-K  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 33    | L-R  
(6 folders) |
| BOX 34    | R-V  
(6 folders) |
Public Relations Correspondence, 1952-1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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| BOX 35    | W-Z and anonymous  
(4 folders)  
1962  
A-F  
(4 folders) |
| BOX 36    | G-S  
(8 folders) |
| BOX 37    | T-Z  
1963  
A-G  
(6 folders) |
| BOX 38    | H-V  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 39    | W-Z and anonymous  
(2 folders)  
1967, A-Z |
| BOX 39    | Set C, 1967-1969  
Autograph requests and form letter replies.  
Organized chronologically by year. |
| BOX 39    | Autograph requests, 1967-1969  
(4 folders) |
| BOX 40-45 | Subject File, 1949-1968  
Subject correspondence sent and received; organizational minutes, reports, and printed matter; personnel forms; bibliographies; notes; and miscellaneous material.  
Arranged alphabetically according to subject matter and chronologically therein. |
| BOX 40    | Alabama's World Fair Commission, 1962  
Alabama State Fair Exhibit, 1961  
American Rocket Society  
1954-Apr. 1958  
(4 folders) |
| BOX 41    | May 1958-1960  
(6 folders) |
| BOX 42    | Photocopies, 1952-1957  
A. V. Grosse Action, launching a satellite, 1951-1957  
Bibliographies of Von Braun's writings  
Calculations for moon book  
Colliers, 1951-1953  
(2 folders)  See also Oversize  
Congress and the space program  
1963-1964  
(2 folders) |
Subject File, 1949-1968

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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</table>
| BOX 43    | 1965-1966  
(2 folders)  
Dedication of Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Ala., thank-you letters, 1960  
German correspondence  
General, 1949-1954  
(2 folders)  
Gesellschaft für Weltraumforschung, 1950-1953  
(2 folders)  
German personnel, 1952  
Guided missile development, miscellaneous declassified material, 1952-1965 |
| BOX 44    | Mercury flight, congratulations, 1961  
Mercury-Redstone 3, congratulations, 1961  
Mercury-Redstone 5, congratulations, 1961  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration conferences, 1961-1963  
Office notes, memoranda, drafts, etc., 1963-1968  
Press relations, 1958-1960  
(3 folders)  
Publications, correspondence concerning  
1949-1953 |
| BOX 45    | 1954-1956  
Ranger 7-9 lunar flights  
(3 folders)  
Saturn rocket, congratulations, 1961  
Saturn C-1 launching, invitations, 1962  
Steuben Society of America, 1960-1961  
Symposium on air travel in thirty years, 1955  
Thiel, Adolph K., dissertation |
| BOX 46-52 | Speeches and Writings, 1934-1969  
Handwritten, typewritten, near-print, printed, and photocopies of speeches and writings by Von Braun and others.  
Arranged chronologically, with longer and undated book and article drafts placed alphabetically by title near the end of the series, followed by speeches and writings by others arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 46    | 1947-Apr. 1959  
(9 folders) |
| BOX 47    | May 1959-Aug. 1961  
(10 folders) |
| BOX 48    | Sept. 1961-June 1968  
(7 folders) |
(5 folders)  
“Across the Moon” |
| BOX 50    | Conquest of the Moon  
The Exploration of Mars  
“First Flight to the Moon”  
(4 folders) |
## The Mars Project

**General**

Handwritten draft of the scientific appendix

“Raketentechnik and Raumfahrtforschung,” Ph. D. dissertation, 1934

“Voyage to Mars”

“Voyage to the Moon”

**BOX 51**

**Miscellany, 1796-1968**

Assorted vellum diplomas, loose clippings, and photocopies of Von Braun's scrapbooks.

Clippings chronologically arranged by year; scrapbooks arranged in rough chronological sequence.

**BOX 52**

Assorted vellum diplomas, 1796-1823

Clippings, 1934-1968

(3 folders)

Citations and awards (photocopies), 1952-1961

German items (photocopies), 1928-1933

Programs (photocopies), 1957-1961

University degrees (photocopies), 1958-1959

**BOX 53 (oversize)**

Colliers rocket drawings, 1951-1953 *(Container 42)*

Scrapbooks

Awards and photocopies of awards

Rocketry, 1930-1934

German scientists come to America, 1945-1952

Rocketry, 1946-1949

**BOX 54 (oversize)**

Rocket to the moon, 1948-1955

Space flight campaign, 1949-1954

Rocket research center started at Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, Ala., 1950-1952

**BOX 55 (oversize)**

Peenemünde in U.S.A., 1950

Practicality of space flight, 1952-1956

Immigration to the United States, 1963

**BOX 56 (oversize)**

Space flight, 1953-1956

Space exploration, 1953-1954

**BOX 57 (oversize)**

International Geophysical Year Project, 1955-1957

Missiles, 1956

United States Army-Jupiter, 1956-1958

**BOX 58-61**

**Addition, 1913-1970, n.d.**

**BOX 58**

**General Correspondence, 1953-1969**

Letters, memoranda, and notes sent and received.

Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.

**BOX 58**

1953-1969, A-Z
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| BOX 58-60 | **Public Relations Correspondence, 1963-1970**  
Autograph requests and congratulatory letters, mostly pertaining to the *Apollo 11* mission.  
Arranged by year with additional distinctions between autograph requests, congratulatory letters, and foreign-language letters. |
| BOX 58 | 1963-1968  
1969  
Autograph requests  
(2 folders)  
Congratulatory letters  
(3 folders) |
| BOX 59 | Foreign language letters  
General  
(6 folders) |
| BOX 60 |  
(2 folders)  
From American citizens  
From prominent individuals  
1970, autograph requests |
| BOX 60-61 | **Subject File, 1959-1969**  
Personnel files, thank-you letters sent to *Apollo 11* team members, and photocopies of correspondence and related matter concerning the House Committee on Science and Astronautics.  
Arranged alphabetically by title of subject. |
| BOX 60-61 | *Apollo 11*, thank-you letters sent, 1969  
Committee on Science and Astronautics (photocopies), 1959-1961  
Personnel files  
1960-1966  
(2 folders) |
| BOX 61 | 1967 |
| BOX 61 | **Speeches and Writings, 1950-1970, n.d.**  
Handwritten drafts and near-print and photocopies of speeches by Von Braun.  
Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 61 | 1950-1970  
(6 folders)  
Miscellaneous rough drafts, n.d.  
(2 folders) |
| BOX 61 | **Miscellany, 1913-1967**  
Miscellaneous printed matter.  
Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 61 | Printed matter, 1913-1967 |