Herman Hollerith Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
1997
Revised 2010 March

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LC Online Catalog record:
http://lccn.loc.gov/mmm73049510

Prepared by James Byers and Wilhelmena Curry
Revised and expanded by T. Michael Womack
Collection Summary

Title: Herman Hollerith Papers
Span Dates: 1850-1982
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1910-1927)
ID No.: MSS49510
Creator: Hollerith, Herman, 1860-1929
Extent: 11,700 items ; 34 containers plus 1 oversize ; 13.6 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Summary: Inventor and businessman. Correspondence, diary, financial and business papers, patents by Hollerith and others, blueprints, drawings, a Hollerith machine punch plate, writings about Hollerith by Geoffrey Austrian and others, biographical material, and other papers relating to Hollerith tabulating machines and their use in census taking (1890-1910), operation of Tabulating Machine Company and its merger with two other companies forming Computer-Tabulating-Recording Company (1911), and Hollerith's association with this company and its successor, International Business Machines Corporation.

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.

People
Hayes, C. L. (Clarke L.)--Correspondence.
Hollerith, Herman, 1860-1929.
Hollerith, Herman, 1892- --Correspondence.
Merrill, Philip P.--Correspondence.
Metcalf, Samuel G.--Correspondence.
Talcott family--Correspondence.
Talcott, Charles G. (Charles Gratiot) Charles G. Talcott papers.
Talcott, Charles G. (Charles Gratiot), -1867.
Talcott, Theodosia L. Theodosia L. Talcott papers.

Organizations
Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company.
Frisbie Motor Company
International Business Machines Corporation.
Tabulating Machine Company.
United States Naval Academy.
United States. Navy--Foreign service.

Subjects
Agriculture--Virginia--Mathews County.
Boarding schools--Vermont--Brattleboro.
Census.
Earthquakes--California--San Francisco.
Fires--California--San Francisco.
Patents.
Railroads--Mexico.
Tabulating machines.

Places
United States--Census, 1890.
United States--Census, 1900.
United States--Census, 1910.

**Occupations**
Businessmen.
Inventors.

**Administrative Information**

**Provenance**
The papers of Herman Hollerith, inventor and businessman, were given to the Library of Congress in four installments. The bulk of the collection was given by Hollerith's heirs in 1972. Additional papers were given by Mrs. Herman Hollerith, Jr., in 1977, by Virginia Hollerith in 1978, and by Richard Hollerith, Jr., in 1995 and 1997.

**Processing History**
The papers of Herman Hollerith were arranged and described in 1973; additional material received subsequently was incorporated into the collection in 1978 and 1997.

**Copyright Status**
In 1972 the copyright in the unpublished writings of Herman Hollerith in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress was dedicated to the public except that the exclusive use of such rights was reserved to Lucia B., Herman, Jr., Nannie T., and Virginia Hollerith during their lifetimes.

**Access and Restrictions**
The papers of Herman Hollerith are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

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

**Biographical Note**

1860, Feb. 29  Born, Buffalo, N.Y.
1879  Graduated, Columbia University School of Mines, New York, N.Y.
1880  Assistant to former teacher William Petit Trowbridge, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.
      Worked on 1880 United States census
1882  Instructor, mechanical engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.
1883-1884  Assistant examiner, United States Patent Office, Washington, D.C.
1884-1890  Worked on perfecting mechanical aid in compiling statistical information for the United States census
      Invented tabulating machine which recorded statistical information through a system of punched holes in nonconducting material
1885-1886  Experimented on electromagnetically operated air brakes and other braking systems for railroads, St. Louis, Mo.
1889, Jan. 8  First patent granted on statistical compilation machines

1890  Awarded Elliot Cresson Medal, Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, Pa., for outstanding invention of the year
   Ph.D., Columbia University, New York, N.Y.
   Married Lucia Beverly Talcott
   Tabulating machine used in United States census

1891  Hollerith machines used in recording census returns in Austria, Canada, and Norway

1895  Attended International Statistics Institute, Berne, Switzerland

1896  Founded Tabulating Machine Co.

1911  Tabulating Machine Co. merged with Computing Scale Co. of America and International Time Recording Co. of New York to form Computing-Tabulating-Recording Co. (later International Business Machines Corporation)

1929, Nov. 1  Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Herman Hollerith (1860-1929) span the years 1850-1982, with the bulk of the material between 1910 and 1927. The collection focuses on the work of Herman Hollerith, inventor and businessman. It consists of six series: Personal Correspondence, Business Correspondence, Special Correspondence, Miscellany, Addition I, and Addition II. Included in the papers are correspondence, printed matter, scrapbooks with newspaper clippings about the Hollerith tabulating machines and their use in census taking, and other material relating to the tabulating business.

Personal Correspondence includes letters with family members, friends, and associates relating to matters such as finances and investments, the purchase and repair of items for the Hollerith home, Hollerith's interest in tabulating and tabulating machines, census work, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The Business Correspondence series, although small, contains information relating to the operation of the Tabulating Machine Company, its merger into the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company in 1911, and Hollerith's later association with this company and its successor, International Business Machines Corporation.

Special Correspondence consists primarily of Hollerith's papers relating to his farm in Mathews County, Virginia. The file treats the maintenance of farm buildings and equipment and the raising of farm animals, particularly Guernsey cows. There is a small amount of printed matter concerning farm equipment.

The Miscellany series contains a chronological file of patents by Hollerith and others relating to his inventions. The series includes business papers, newspaper clippings, blueprints and drawings, printed material, and one Hollerith machine punch plate. The use of this plate is illustrated in an article entitled "Counting a Nation by Electricity," reprinted from Electrical Engineer, 11 November 1891. Two scrapbooks contain mostly newspaper clippings of the early development and use of tabulating machines, particularly for census taking from the period 1890 to 1910.

Addition I consists of correspondence between Hollerith and his son, Herman Hollerith, Jr., relating to family affairs and some of Hollerith's inventions.

Addition II contains family correspondence, writings about Hollerith, and miscellaneous material. Family correspondence consists primarily of exchanges of letters among members of the Talcott family, into which Hollerith married in 1890, and a small amount of correspondence of members of the Hollerith family. Letters from 1865-1866 chronicle the employment of Charles G. Talcott, Sr., as a civil engineer in the construction of the railway from Vera Cruz to Mexico City, Mexico, under Emperor Maximilian.
The bulk of the family correspondence, numbering over 360 letters, however, is between Theodosia Talcott, Hollerith's mother-in-law, and her eldest son, Charles G. Talcott, Jr. Their exchange spans a twenty-one year period, 1868-1889, covering her son's boarding school days in Brattleboro, Vermont, his years at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and his tours of duty in the United States Navy. Charles Talcott, Jr., served as an assistant engineer on several naval vessels and saw much of the world during his assignments. His letters contain detailed drawings and charts of various ports of call as well as descriptive accounts of inhabitants, customs, architecture, and diplomatic relations in Argentina, Brazil, China, Italy, Japan, Korea, and Uruguay.

Theodosia Talcott's letters contain information regarding family members and friends as well as local and regional events. Letters from other family members were frequently enclosed. With four sons and a daughter to support following the death of her husband, Talcott found employment at the United States Patent Office, where she was one of the first female clerks. In a letter of 3 October 1877 she describes the fire which nearly destroyed the office. Six years later Herman Hollerith met his future mother-in-law while working there as an assistant examiner. Talcott describes the wedding of her daughter Lucia and Hollerith in a letter of 15 September 1890 to her son Harry. Also of interest in the Hollerith family correspondence is a letter from Nellie Keohan to Lucia B. Hollerith recounting the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906.

A file of writings about Hollerith in Addition II contains correspondence, drafts, and published material by various authors, including Hollerith's major biographer, Geoffrey D. Austrian, as well as Virginia Hollerith, daughter of the inventor. Biographical material, Hollerith's diary of 1884, and newspaper and magazine clippings are also included among this additional material.

An announcement of Herman Hollerith's death published by International Business Machines in 1929 constitutes the Oversize material.

Correspondents include C. L. Hayes, Philip P. Merrill, Samuel G. Metcalf, and the Frisbie Motor Company.

### Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in seven series:

- **Personal Correspondence, 1882-1929**
- **Business Correspondence, 1894-1929**
- **Special Correspondence, 1905-1929**
- **Miscellany, 1871-1929**
- **Addition I, 1913-1929**
- **Addition II, 1850-1984**
- **Oversize, 1929**
### Description of Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1-9</td>
<td><strong>Personal Correspondence, 1882-1929</strong></td>
<td>Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically therein.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 10-12</td>
<td><strong>Business Correspondence, 1894-1929</strong></td>
<td>Letters sent and received, including a small amount of printed matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arranged chronologically. Correspondence concerning the financial arrangement of the merger of the Tabulating Machine Co. into the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Co. is filed separately at the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 13-20</td>
<td><strong>Special Correspondence, 1905-1929</strong></td>
<td>Correspondence relating to Hollerith's farm in Mathews County, Va., dated 1911-1928, and his patents, dated 1905-1923.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The farm correspondence is organized into letters sent and received and arranged chronologically therein. The patent correspondence is arranged by name of correspondent and therein chronologically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 21-29</td>
<td><strong>Miscellany, 1871-1929</strong></td>
<td>Patents by Hollerith and others, printed matter, business papers, blueprints and drawings, one Hollerith machine punch plate, newspaper clippings, and two scrapbooks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arranged alphabetically by type of material. The patents are further arranged chronologically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 30</td>
<td><strong>Addition I, 1913-1929</strong></td>
<td>Correspondence between Hollerith and his son, Herman Hollerith, Jr., concerning family affairs and Hollerith's inventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arranged chronologically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 31-34</td>
<td><strong>Addition II, 1850-1984</strong></td>
<td>Letters among members of the Talcott and Hollerith families arranged chronologically, drafts and printed versions of writings about Hollerith arranged alphabetically by author, and biographical material, a diary, miscellaneous material, and newspaper and magazine clippings arranged alphabetically by type of material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OV 1</td>
<td><strong>Oversize, 1929</strong></td>
<td>Poster.</td>
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</table>
Container List

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BOX 1 | Letters received  
Jan. 1882-Apr. 1906  
(6 folders)  

BOX 2 | May 1906-Dec. 1908  
(6 folders)  

BOX 3 | Jan. 1909-Mar. 1918  
(6 folders)  

BOX 4 | Apr. 1918-May 1920  
(6 folders)  

BOX 5 | June 1920-Dec. 1922  
(8 folders)  

BOX 6 | Jan. 1923-June 1926  
(9 folders)  

BOX 7 | July 1926-Sept. 1929, undated  
(9 folders)  

BOX 8 | Letters sent  
Jan. 1894-Sept. 1920  
(9 folders)  

BOX 9 | Jan. 1921-Nov. 1927  
(10 folders)  

BOX 10-12 | Business Correspondence, 1894-1929  |
|          | Letters sent and received, including a small amount of printed matter.  |
|          | Arranged chronologically. Correspondence concerning the financial arrangement of the merger  |
|          | of the Tabulating Machine Co. into the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Co. is filed  |
|          | separately at the end.  

BOX 10 | Feb. 1894-July 1914  
(9 folders)  

BOX 11 | Aug. 1914-Apr. 1929, undated  
(11 folders)  

BOX 12 | Correspondence relating to merger, 1911  
(4 folders)  

BOX 13-20 | Special Correspondence, 1905-1929  |
|          | Correspondence relating to Hollerith's farm in Mathews County, Va., dated 1911-1928, and his  |
|          | patents, dated 1905-1923.  |
|          | The farm correspondence is organized into letters sent and received and arranged  |
|          | chronologically therein. The patent correspondence is arranged by name of correspondent  |
|          | and therein chronologically.  |

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### Special Correspondence, 1905-1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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</table>
| BOX 13    | Re farm, Mathews Co., Va.  
Letters sent  
Nov. 1917-June 1921  
(9 folders) |
| BOX 14    | July 1921-June 1928  
(11 folders) |
| BOX 15    | Letters received  
Oct. 1911-Sept. 1919  
(8 folders) |
| BOX 16    | Oct. 1919-Sept. 1921  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 17    | Oct. 1921-Dec. 1924  
(9 folders) |
| BOX 18    | Jan. 1925-Sept. 1927  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 19    | Oct. 1927-Nov. 1929, undated  
(4 folders) |
| BOX 20    | Re patents  
J. Nota McGill, 1905-1915  
(3 folders) |
| BOX 21-29 | McGill and Maguire, 1915-1921  
(6 folders)  
McGill and Maguire; Francis S. Maguire; and Cooper, Kerr, and Dunham, 1922-1927  
S. G. Metcalf, 1911-1927 |

### Miscellany, 1871-1929

Patents by Hollerith and others, printed matter, business papers, blueprints and drawings, one Hollerith machine punch plate, newspaper clippings, and two scrapbooks. Arranged alphabetically by type of material. The patents are further arranged chronologically.

| BOX 21    | Award, 1905  
Blueprints and drawings, 1905-1922, undated  
(2 folders)  
Business papers, 1880-1927, undated  
(4 folders)  
Card case and cards, 1910-1928, undated  
Hollerith machine punch plate, 1889, 1895 |
| BOX 22    | Patents  
By Hollerith, 1886-1917  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 23    | By others  
Jan. 1911-Apr. 1924  
(8 folders) |
| BOX 24    | June 1914-Mar. 1915  
(6 folders) |
| BOX 25    | May 1915-Mar. 1924  
(4 folders) |
Miscellany, 1871-1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 26</td>
<td>Related material, 1916, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Printed matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1871-1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7 folders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 27</td>
<td>1880-1914, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5 folders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 28</td>
<td>1885-1927, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(7 folders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 29</td>
<td>Scrapbooks, 1889-1908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2 folders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tabulating machine drawings, undated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BOX 30  
Addition I, 1913-1929

Correspondence between Hollerith and his son, Herman Hollerith, Jr., concerning family affairs and Hollerith's inventions.
Arranged chronologically.

BOX 30  
Correspondence between Hollerith and his son, Herman Hollerith, Jr.
- Oct. 1913-Nov. 1916
- Mar. 1917-Dec. 1918
- Feb. 1919-Dec. 1921
- Jan. 1922-Dec. 1923
- Jan. 1924-Sept. 1929, undated

BOX 31-34  
Addition II, 1850-1984

Letters among members of the Talcott and Hollerith families arranged chronologically, drafts and printed versions of writings about Hollerith arranged alphabetically by author, and biographical material, a diary, miscellaneous material, and newspaper and magazine clippings arranged alphabetically by type of material.

BOX 31  
Family correspondence
- Talcott family
  - 1865-1880
  - (10 folders)
- BOX 32
  - 1881-1885
  - (8 folders)
- BOX 33
  - 1886-1891, undated (with enclosure from 1850)
  - (5 folders)
- Hollerith family, 1906-1963

Writings about Hollerith
- By author
  - Austrian, Geoffrey D., 1964-1984
  - Blodgett, John H., 1968
  - Dicksee, Lawrence R., 1916, undated
  - Greene, C. A. Everard, undated
  - Hollerith, Virginia, 1945, 1970, undated
  - (2 folders)
  - Mark, Mary Louise, 1945-1958, undated
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Container</th>
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</table>
| BOX 34    | Martin, T. C., 1891  
            | Newcomb, H. T., 1912  
            | Rex, Frederick J., 1960-1963  
            | Miscellaneous correspondence, 1930-1973  
            | Miscellany  
            | Bible owned by Flora Ferguson, Hollerith's fiancé, inscribed 5 Feb. 1881  
            | Biographical material, 1929-1930, undated *See also Oversize*  
            | Diary, 1884  
            | Miscellaneous material, 1889-1954  
            | Newspaper and magazine clippings, 1925-1982, undated  
            | (2 folders)  
            | Photograph of Flora Ferguson, circa 1880  
            | Railroad conductor's punch, used by Hollerith while testing tabulating system, Baltimore, Md., 1886 |
| BOX OV 1  | **Oversize, 1929**  
            | Poster. |
| BOX OV 1  | **Addition II**  
            | Miscellany  
            | Biographical material, 1929 ([Container 34](#)) |