

Wernher Von Braun Papers
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Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
1978

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Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

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Collection Summary

Title: Wernher Von Braun Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1796-1970

Bulk Dates: 1950-1970

ID No.: MSS44172

Creator: Von Braun, Wernher, 1912-1977

Extent: 20,000 items

Extent: 56 containers plus 5 oversize

Extent: 22.8 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English and German

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm77044172>

Summary: 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 LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Bechtle, Otto Wolfgang--Correspondence.

Brucker, Wilber Marion, 1894-1968--Correspondence.

Durant, Frederick C., III, 1916-2015--Correspondence.

Gartmann, Heinz, 1917-1960--Correspondence.

Gerhards, Jupps--Correspondence.

Grosse, Aristid von, 1905-1985--Correspondence.

Koelle, H. H. (Heinz Hermann), 1925-2011--Correspondence.

Ley, Willy, 1906-1969--Correspondence.

Loeser, G.--Correspondence.

Medaris, John B. (John Bruce), 1902-1990--Correspondence.

Ryan, Cornelius--Correspondence.

Sikorsky, Igor Ivan, 1889-1972--Correspondence.

Sparkman, John, 1899-1985--Correspondence.

Stuhlinger, Ernst, 1913-2008--Correspondence.

Truax, Robert Collins, 1917-2010--Correspondence.

Von Braun, Wernher, 1912-1977.

Watkins, Armitage, 1906-1989--Correspondence.

Whipple, Fred L. (Fred Lawrence), 1906-2004--Correspondence.

Organizations

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)
United States. Department of Defense.
United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Subjects

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

Places

Redstone Arsenal (Ala.)

Occupations

Aerospace engineers.
Public officials.

Acquisition Information

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, but later given to the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, Huntsville, Alabama, by his widow, Maria Von Braun, in 2007. Photocopies of the addition were made by the Library and retained as part of the collection.

Processing History

The papers of Wernher Von Braun were arranged and described by Allan J. Teichroew in 1978.

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.

Related Material

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

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.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Wernher Von Braun 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, Wernher Von Braun Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1912, Mar. 23	Born, Wirsitz, East Prussia (now part of Poland)
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
1945-1950	Technical adviser at White Sands Missile Range, N. Mex. 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 <i>The Mars Project</i> (Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 91 pp.), translated by Henry J. White Published <i>Man on the Moon</i> (London: Sidgwick and Jackson. 134 pp.), with Fred L. Whipple and Willy Ley. Also published as <i>Conquest of the Moon</i> (New York: Viking Press. 126 pp.)
1955	Naturalized as American citizen
1956	Published <i>The Exploration of Mars</i> (New York: Viking Press. 176 pp.), with Willy Ley
1956-1960	Director, Development Operations Division, Army Ballistic Missile Agency, Huntsville, Ala.
1957	Received Distinguished Civilian Service Award, Department of Defense
1958	Received Dr. Robert Goddard Memorial Trophy
1960	Published <i>First Men to the Moon</i> (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 <i>History of Rocketry & Space Travel</i> (New York: Crowell. 244 pp.), with Frederick I. Ordway III Published <i>Space Frontier</i> (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
1977, June 16	Died, Alexandria, Va.

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 Gesellschaft 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.

Correspondents in this collection include Aristad V. Grosse, Donald Jackson, Robert C. Truax, Frederick C. Durant III, F. D. McHugh, Armitage Watkins, Igor Sikorsky, Fred L. Whipple, John S. Burlew, Wilbur M. Brucker, J. B. Medaris, I. M. Levitt, Willy Ley, Cornelius Ryan, Chesley Bonestell, H. H. Koelle, Heinz Gartmann, G. Loeser, K. Shuette, Jupp Gerhards, Otto Wolfgang Bechtle, D. C. Fahrney, Kenneth W. Gatland, Bert J. Slattery, Ernst Stuhlinger, Lee James, J. Preston Layton, James J. Harford, Walter R. Dornberger, A. J. Eggers, and John Sparkman.

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.

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

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-12	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1950-1969</u></p> <p>Letters, memoranda, and notes sent and received, with related matter such as enclosed technical reports, photographs, charts, drawings, and personnel forms.</p> <p>Organized chronologically by year and alphabetically therein by topic, name of person, or organization.</p>
BOX 13-14	<p><u>Invitation File, 1952-1967</u></p> <p>Letters of invitation received, with replies.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically.</p> <p><u>Public Relations Correspondence, 1952-1969</u></p>
BOX 14-20	<p><u>Set A, 1952-1958</u></p> <p>Fan mail and public correspondence.</p> <p>Organized chronologically by month.</p>
BOX 20-39	<p><u>Set B, 1958-1967</u></p> <p>Fan mail and public correspondence.</p> <p>Organized chronologically by year and alphabetically by name of correspondent therein.</p>
BOX 39	<p><u>Set C, 1967-1969</u></p> <p>Autograph requests and form letter replies.</p> <p>Organized chronologically by year.</p>
BOX 40-45	<p><u>Subject File, 1949-1968</u></p> <p>Subject correspondence sent and received; organizational minutes, reports, and printed matter; personnel forms; bibliographies; notes; and miscellaneous material.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically according to subject matter and chronologically therein.</p>
BOX 46-52	<p><u>Speeches and Writings, 1934-1969</u></p> <p>Handwritten, typewritten, near-print, printed, and photocopies of speeches and writings by Von Braun and others.</p> <p>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.</p>
BOX 52-57	<p><u>Miscellany, 1796-1968</u></p> <p>Assorted vellum diplomas, loose clippings, and photocopies of Von Braun's scrapbooks.</p> <p>Clippings chronologically arranged by year; scrapbooks arranged in rough chronological sequence.</p>
BOX 58-61	<p><u>Addition, 1913-1970</u></p>
BOX 58	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1953-1969</u></p> <p>Photocopies of letters, memoranda, and notes sent and received.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.</p>

BOX 58-60

Public Relations Correspondence, 1963-1970

Photocopies of 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 60-61

Subject File, 1959-1969

Photocopies of 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 61

Speeches and Writings, 1950-1970

Photocopies of handwritten and near-print speeches by Von Braun.

Arranged chronologically.

BOX 61

Miscellany, 1913-1967

Photocopies of miscellaneous printed matter.

Arranged chronologically.

Container List

Container	Contents
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 1	1950, A-Z 1952, A-Z 1953, A-Z (3 folders) 1954, A-Z (3 folders) 1955 A-D
BOX 2	E-Z (3 folders) 1956, A-Z (3 folders) 1957 A-G
BOX 3	H-Z (3 folders) 1958, A-Z (5 folders)
BOX 4	1959, A-Z (5 folders) 1960 A-G (3 folders)
BOX 5	H-Z (6 folders) 1961 A-B (2 folders)
BOX 6	C-O (10 folders)
BOX 7	P-Z (5 folders) 1962 A-C (2 folders)
BOX 8	D-Sh (7 folders)

General Correspondence, 1950-1969

Container	Contents
BOX 9	Si-Z (2 folders) 1963 A-K (5 folders)
BOX 10	L-Z (4 folders) 1964, A-Z (3 folders) 1965 A-G
BOX 11	H-Z (3 folders) 1966, A-Z (3 folders)
BOX 12	1967, A-Z (2 folders) 1968, A-Z 1969, A-Z
BOX 13-14	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	
BOX 14-20	Set A, 1952-1958 Fan mail and public correspondence. Organized chronologically by month.
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)

Public Relations Correspondence, 1952-1969

Container	Contents
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-CI (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)
	1959
	A-D (4 folders)
BOX 26	E-Q (7 folders)
BOX 27	R-Z (3 folders)
	1960
	A-CI (5 folders)
BOX 28	Cm-I (9 folders)
BOX 29	J-N (9 folders)
BOX 30	O-Sz (9 folders)
BOX 31	T-Z (5 folders)
	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

Container	Contents
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 American Ballistic Missile Agency, 1958-1961 <i>Astronautica Acta</i> , 1954-1958 A. V. Grosse Action, launching a satellite, 1951-1957 Bibliographies of Von Braun's writings Calculations for moon book <i>Colliers</i> , 1951-1953 <i>See also Oversize</i> (2 folders) Congress and the space program 1963-1964 (2 folders)

Subject File, 1949-1968

Container	Contents
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	<i>Mercury</i> flight, congratulations, 1961 <i>Mercury-Redstone 3</i> , congratulations, 1961 <i>Mercury-Redstone 5</i> , 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 1954-1956
BOX 45	<i>Ranger 7-9</i> lunar flights (3 folders) <i>Saturn</i> rocket, congratulations, 1961 <i>Saturn C-1</i> 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)
BOX 49	July 1968-1969, undated (5 folders) "Across the Moon"
BOX 50	<i>Conquest of the Moon</i> <i>The Exploration of Mars</i> "First Flight to the Moon" (4 folders)

Speeches and Writings, 1934-1969

Container	Contents
	<i>The Mars Project</i>
	General
BOX 51	Handwritten draft of the scientific appendix
	“Raketentechnik and Raumfahrtforschung,” Ph. D. dissertation, 1934
	“Voyage to Mars”
BOX 52	“Voyage to the Moon”
	By others, 1962-1965
	(3 folders)
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 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 oversize 53	<i>Colliers</i> rocket drawings, 1951-1953 (<i>Container 42</i>)
	Scrapbooks
	Awards and photocopies of awards
	Rocketry, 1930-1934
	German scientists come to America, 1945-1952
	Rocketry, 1946-1949
BOX oversize 54	Rocket to the moon, 1948-1955
	Space flight campaign, 1949-1954
	Rocket research center started at Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, Ala., 1950-1952
BOX oversize 55	Peenemünde in U.S.A., 1950
	Practicality of space flight, 1952-1956
	Immigration to the United States, 1963
BOX oversize 56	Space flight, 1953-1956
	Space exploration, 1953-1954
BOX oversize 57	International Geophysical Year Project, 1955-1957
	Missiles, 1956
	United States Army-Jupiter, 1956-1958
BOX 58-61	Addition, 1913-1970
BOX 58	General Correspondence, 1953-1969
	Photocopies of letters, memoranda, and notes sent and received.
	Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.
BOX 58	1953-1969, A-Z

Addition, 1913-1970

Container	Contents
BOX 58-60	Public Relations Correspondence, 1963-1970 Photocopies of autograph requests and congratulatory letters, mostly pertaining to the <i>Apollo 11</i> 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	General (2 folders) From American citizens From prominent individuals 1970, autograph requests
BOX 60-61	Subject File, 1959-1969 Photocopies of personnel files, thank-you letters sent to <i>Apollo 11</i> 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	<i>Apollo 11</i> , 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 Photocopies of handwritten and near-print speeches by Von Braun. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 61	1950-1970 (6 folders) Miscellaneous rough drafts, undated (2 folders)
BOX 61	Miscellany, 1913-1967 Photocopies of miscellaneous printed matter. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 61	Printed matter, 1913-1967