

Philip Hauge Abelson Papers
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Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

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Collection Summary

Title: Philip Hauge Abelson Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1924-2002

Bulk Dates: 1954-1989

ID No.: MSS84803

Creator: Abelson, Philip Hauge

Extent: 59,000 items

Extent: 176 containers plus 1 oversize

Extent: 70.4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm2001084803>

Summary: Nuclear physicist, chemist, and editor. Correspondence, notes, reports, speeches and writings, and other papers documenting Abelson's contribution to scientific policy-making through committees, organizations, and publications.

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

Abelson, Philip Hauge.

Organizations

American Association for the Advancement of Science.

American Geophysical Union.

Bio-energy Council.

Carnegie Institution of Washington.

Carnegie Institution of Washington. Department of Terrestrial Magnetism. Biophysics Section.

Carnegie Institution of Washington. Geophysical Laboratory.

International Union of Geological Sciences.

Jet Propulsion Laboratory (U.S.)

National Academy of Sciences (U.S.)

Subjects

Biochemistry.

Biology.

Biophysics.

Geology.

Science--Periodicals.

Science--Societies, etc.

Science.

Titles

Science.

Occupations

Chemists.

Editors.

Nuclear physicists.

Acquisition Information

The papers of Philip Hauge Abelson were given to the Library of Congress by Abelson in 2001 and 2002. His daughter, Ellen Abelson Cherniavsky, gave additional material to the Library in 2004.

Processing History

Part I of the papers of Philip Hauge Abelson was processed by Donna Ellis in 2003. Additional material was processed as Part II by Joseph K. Brooks with the assistance of Jeffery Bryson in 2017.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Philip Hauge Abelson in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Philip Hauge Abelson 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: Roman numeral designation of the Part followed by a colon and container number, Philip Hauge Abelson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1913, Apr. 27	Born, Tacoma, Wash.
1935	M.S., Washington State University, Pullman, Wash.
1936	Married Neva Martin (died 2000)
1939-1941	Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley, Calif. Identified products of uranium fission Assistant physicist, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D. C.
1940	Codiscoverer with Edwin M. McMillan of element 93 (neptunium) Developed liquid thermal diffusion, a new method to separate uranium isotopes
1941-1946	Associate physicist, physicist, senior physicist, and principal physicist, Naval Research Laboratory, Washington, D.C.
1945	Awarded United States Navy Distinguished Civilian Service Award
1946-1953	Chair, Biophysics Section, Department of Terrestrial Magnetism, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D.C.
1953-1971	Director, Geophysical Laboratory, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D.C.
1959	Elected to National Academy of Sciences
1960-1963	Member, General Advisory Committee, Atomic Energy Commission
1962-1984	Editor, <i>Science</i> magazine
1968-1981	Council member, National Academy of Sciences, with a seven-year absence from 1971 to 1978
1971-1978	President, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D.C.

1972	President, American Geophysical Union Awarded Kalinga Prize, Unesco
1974	Awarded American Medical Association Scientific Achievement Award
1978-1980	Chairman, Board of Trustees, Bio-Energy Council
1984	Received Distinguished Public Service Award, National Science Foundation
1987	Awarded National Medal of Science
1988	Awarded the American Geophysical Unions's Waldo E. Smith Award
2004, Aug. 1	Died, Bethesda, Md.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Philip Hauge Abelson (1913-2004) span the years 1924-2002, with the bulk of the material dating from 1954 to 1989. Abelson was a nuclear physicist and chemist who codiscovered the element neptunium, invented the liquid thermal diffusion isotope separation technique critical in creating the large amount of nuclear fuel needed for building the first atomic bombs, and found a way to scale nuclear reactors to fit into, fuel, and power submarines. The collection, however, mainly documents Abelson's career from the late 1940s through the 1980s when he focused on administration, writing, and editing, serving the Carnegie Institution of Washington successively as chairman of the Biophysics Section, director of the Geophysical Laboratory, and president of the institution, and editing *Science* magazine. The collection consists of two parts. Further descriptions of each part follows.

Part I

Part I spans the years 1946-2002, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1970-1989. It is organized into the following four series: [Committees and Organizations](#), [Science Magazine](#), [Speeches and Writings](#), and a [Miscellany](#) consisting of awards, biographical material, general correspondence, photographs, and printed material.

The [Committees and Organizations](#) series contains correspondence, financial records, grant proposals, minutes, publications, and reports relating to Abelson's participation in scientific professional organizations and advisory committees. Notable organizations include the American Geophysical Union, Bio-Energy Council, Carnegie Institution of Washington, International Union of Geological Sciences, Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology, and the National Academy of Sciences.

The [Science magazine](#) series consists of texts of editorials written by Abelson during his tenure as editor of the chief publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. An index to the editorials is included. The correspondence primarily contains reactions of the general public and the scientific community to opinions voiced by Abelson in his editorials. As editor of this important publication, Abelson visited both foreign and domestic research laboratories. His notes and correspondence regarding these trips are included.

The [Speeches and Writings](#) series contains chiefly texts of speeches given by Abelson to educational institutions, private companies, and scientific organizations. Also included are articles written for publications other than *Science* and correspondence regarding two of Abelson's books.

Part II

Part II spans the years 1924-1984, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1954-1978. It is organized into the following four series: [Carnegie Institution of Washington](#), [Speeches and Writings](#), [Notebooks and Reference Material](#), and [Oversize](#).

The [Carnegie Institution of Washington](#) series was generated when Abelson directed its Geophysical Laboratory (1953-1971), and served as president of the Carnegie Institution (1971-1978). The series is arranged as received and includes correspondence, reports, topical files, project files, printed matter, writings, presentations, photographs, and miscellaneous material. In this original order, files are arranged alphabetically primarily by name of person or organization. In some instances organizations are filed by identifying acronyms.

The [Speeches and Writings](#) series includes Abelson's scientific papers, articles, editorials, speeches, presentations, and testimony and is arranged chronologically and thereunder alphabetically by title. [The Notebooks and Reference Material](#)

series documents Abelson's postwar interest in biochemistry after an early career focused on the nuclear aspects of chemistry and physics. The Oversize item is a scrapbook containing appreciative letters received by Abelson when he retired from the editorship of *Science* in 1984.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in two parts composed of eight series:

Part I:

- Committees and Organizations, 1946-2001
- Science Magazine, 1962-2000
- Speeches and Writings, 1950-1999
- Miscellany, 1939-2002

Part II:

- Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1924-1978
- Speeches and Writings, 1937-1978
- Notebooks and Reference Material, 1937-1955
- Oversize, 1984

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX I:1-24	<p><u>Part I: Committees and Organizations, 1946-2001</u></p> <p>Correspondence, financial records, grant proposals, minutes, publications, and reports relating to Abelson's participation in scientific professional organizations and advisory committees. Arranged alphabetically by name of committee or organization and therein chronologically.</p>
BOX I:25-36	<p><u>Part I: Science Magazine, 1962-2000</u></p> <p>Texts of editorials written by Abelson, correspondence in reaction to his editorials, and notes taken on business trips. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically.</p>
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