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Copyright in the unpublished writings of Philip Hauge Abelson in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the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

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

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.

BOX I:36-42  Part I: Speeches and Writings, 1950-1999
Articles, books, and texts of speeches along with related correspondence and administrative material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically.

BOX I:42-46  Part I: Miscellany, 1939-2002
Awards, biographical material, general correspondence consisting primarily of invitations to speak, photographs, and printed matter. Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically.

BOX II:1-105  Part II: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1924-1978
Correspondence, reports, writings, project files, subject files, printed matter, and miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by name of person or organization, type of material, or topic.

BOX II:105-126  Part II: Speeches and Writings, 1937-1978
Articles, scientific papers, speeches, conferences, presentations, and testimony. Arranged chronologically and thereunder alphabetically by title.

BOX II:127-130  Part II: Notebooks and Reference Material, 1937-1948
Scientific notebooks and related printed matter. Arranged into biochemistry or geochemistry files and alphabetically thereunder by topic or type of material.

BOX II:OV 1  Part II: Oversize, 1984
Album of appreciation letters on Abelson's retirement from Science magazine.
## Container List

<table>
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<td><strong>Part I: Committees and Organizations, 1946-2001</strong>&lt;br&gt;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.</td>
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| BOX I:8   | President  
|           | 1946, 1956-1961  
|           | 1964-1977  
|           | (2 folders)  
|           | Specialized Conference on the Application of Science and Technology to Latin American Development, Brasilia, Brazil, 1972  
|           | (3 folders)  
| BOX I:9   | Studies of Biosynthesis in Escherichia Coli, 1963  
|           | Chemical Industry Institute of Toxicology, Research Triangle Park, N.C., 1979, 1985  
|           | Council on Science and Technology for Development  
|           | 1977-1979  
|           | (5 folders)  
| BOX I:10  | 1980-1981, undated  
|           | Energy Information Administration, 1979  
|           | Geological Survey of Canada, 1979  
|           | International Union of Geological Sciences  
|           | 1972-1979  
|           | (3 folders)  
|           | 1980  
|           | Jan.-Mar.  
| BOX I:11  | Apr.-Nov.  
|           | (2 folders)  
|           | Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, Calif.  
|           | Correspondence, 1976-1984  
|           | (3 folders)  
|           | Notes, 2001  
|           | Photographs, 1978-1980  
|           | Printed matter  
|           | 1978-1980  
| BOX I:12  | 1981, undated  
|           | National Academy of Public Administration, 1978-1984  
|           | (4 folders)  
|           | National Academy of Sciences  
|           | Awards, 1981-1982  
|           | Committee on an Aging Society, 1982-1983  
|           | Committee to Review the Office of Information, 1982  
|           | Congressional endowment proposal, 1980  
|           | Correspondence  
|           | 1978  
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Philip Hauge Abelson Papers
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Part I: Committees and Organizations, 1946-2001

Treasurer's reports, 1979-1981
National Commission on Air Quality, 1981

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(2 folders)
Phi Beta Kappa, 1979-1982, undated
President's Science Advisory Committee, 1980
(5 folders)
Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT), 1979
United States Association for the Club of Rome
1977

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United States Association for the Club of Rome
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(5 folders)
United States Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, 1978-1979
(2 folders)

BOX 1:24
United States Navy, Naval Research Laboratory, Washington, D.C.
Atomic Energy Submarine, 1946
(4 folders)

BOX 1:25-36
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.

BOX 1:25
Correspondence
1962
(2 folders)
1963
Jan.-Aug.
(6 folders)

BOX 1:26
Sept.-Dec.
(2 folders)
1964-1965
(6 folders)

BOX 1:27
1966-1969
(8 folders)

BOX 1:28
1970-1972
(9 folders)

BOX 1:29
1973-1974
(8 folders)

BOX 1:30
1975-1985, undated
(8 folders)

BOX 1:31
Editorials
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<td>E.I. duPont de Nemours &amp; Co., 1978, undated</td>
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<td>International Business Machines Corp., 1978</td>
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<td><strong>BOX 1:36-42</strong></td>
<td><strong>Part I: Speeches and Writings, 1950-1999</strong></td>
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### Part I: Speeches and Writings, 1950-1999

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            1982  
            Jan.-May |
| BOX 1:41  | July-Nov.  
            (4 folders)  
            1983-1990  
            (4 folders) |
| BOX 1:42  | 1991-1999, undated  
            (3 folders) |
| BOX 1:42-46 | **Part I: Miscellany, 1939-2002**  
Awards, biographical material, general correspondence consisting primarily of invitations to speak, photographs, and printed matter.  
Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically. |
| BOX 1:42  | Abelson, Neva, 1991-2000, undated  
Appointment books and calendars, 1963-1979  
(5 folders) |
Biographical material  
  Autobiography, 1997, undated  
  Oral history transcripts, 2002, undated  
Correspondence  
  1962-1970  
  (6 folders) |
| BOX 1:44  | 1971-1976  
            (10 folders)  
            1977  
            Jan.-Sept.  
            (2 folders) |
| BOX 1:45  | Oct.-Dec.  
  1978-1981  
  (6 folders)  
  1983  
  Jan.-Apr.  
  (2 folders) |
| BOX 1:46  | May-Dec.  
            (2 folders)  
  (3 folders)  
Photographs, 1939, 1968, 1984, undated |
Part II: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1924-1978

Correspondence, reports, writings, project files, subject files, printed matter, and miscellaneous material.
Arranged alphabetically by name of person or organization, type of material, or topic.

BOX II:1

4-minute mile, 1975-1976
"A" miscellaneous, 1971-1976
AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science), Section C meeting 1966
Ackerman, E. A., 1971
Adelberg, Edward A., 1954
AEC (Atomic Energy Commission)
    California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, Calif., 1961
    CERN (European Council for Nuclear Research), 1961
    Commercial nuclear power, 1961

BOX II:2

Controlled fusion, 1961-1963
Court cases, 1960
Defense Science Board, 1960
Fermi Award, 1962-1963
Future role of AEC labs, 1960

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    General, 1960-1963
    Monthly report, 1962
    High energy accelerator, 1963

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Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, 1961
Lawrence Award, 1961-1965
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Miscellaneous, 1960-192
Miscellaneous correspondence, 1960-1964

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(2 folders)
    Organic fouling in OMRE (Organic Moderated Experiment), 1960
    Project Gnome, 1961
    Public advisory committees, 1961

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Radioactive fallout, 1960
Reactor Subcommittee, 1960
Sherwood Subcommittee, 1962
Soviet Union, 1963
Test ban and fallout, 1960
Travel, 1960-1963
    Uranium enrichment program, 1971
    Aherns, Louis H., 1954-1958
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| **BOX II:7** | American Association of Petroleum Geologists, 1954-1970  
American Chemical Society, 1954-1970  
American Council on Education, 1973  
American Gas Association, 1974  
American Geological Institute, 1959-1970 |
| **BOX II:8** | American Geophysical Union, 1973-1978  
(2 folders)  
American Men and Women of Science, 1968-1975  
American Nuclear Society, 1962-1964  
American Philosophical Society, 1976 |
| **BOX II:9** | American Security and Trust Co., 1974  
American Society of Microbiology, 1972-1976  
(2 folders)  
American Society of Naturalists, 1972-1977  
American University, Washington, D.C., 1973  
*American Weekly*, article about Abelson's contribution to the development of the nuclear submarine, 1958-1967  
Amino acids papers, 1954-1971  
1953-1960  
(7 folders) |
| **BOX II:10** | 1961-1967  
(7 folders) |
| **BOX II:11** | 1968-1970  
(3 folders)  
Arrhenius, Gustaf O., 1955  
Asian Foundation, 1974  
Autograph requests, 1972-1977  
Automobile, 1977 |
| **BOX II:12** | Avery, R. Stanton, 1976  
Award, American Association of Petroleum Geologists, 1977  
Award, American Medical Association scientific achievement awards, 1974  
Award, Association of Earth Science Editors, 1976  
Award, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pa., 1970  
Award, *Modern Medicine*, 1967  
"B" miscellaneous 1954-1977  
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| **BOX II:13** | "B" miscellaneous, 1954-1977  
Babcock notes, Chilean travel, 1968 |
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<td>Biochimica et Biophysica Acta, 1953</td>
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**BOX II:14**

| Biographical data, 1953-1977 |
| Biographical, miscellaneous, 1961-1970 |
| Biographies, undated |
| Biography |
| American Chemical Society, 1972 |
| American Chemical Society, symposium, undated |
| College of Physicians, undated |
| Current Biography, 1965 |
| "Energy for Tomorrow," undated |
| Narative, undated |
| Saturday Review, 1962 |
| Short, undated |
| Sketch, undated |
| Biophysical Society, 1972-1977 |
| Block, Richard J., 1954-1960 |
| Blood group antibodies, undated |
| Blum, Harold F., 1954-1956 |

**BOX II:15**

| Board on Mineral Resources, National Research Council, 1976 |

**BOX II:16**

| Board of Mineral Resources, National Research Council, 1977 |
| Boffey, Philip, undated |
| Bowen, Ira S., 1962 |
| Boyd, F. R., 1957-1960 |
| Boyd, George, 1953-1959 |
| Bramlette, Milton N., 1956 |

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<p>| Breger, Irving A., 1956-1957 |
| Brode, Wallace R., 1954-1959 |
| Bronk, Detlev W., 1955-1965 |
| Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, N.Y., 1963-1964 |
| Brookings Institution, 1967-1971 |
| Brown, Harrison, undated |
| Brown, Harrison S., 1954-1962 |</p>
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| Box II:18 | Bureau of Mines, Department of the Interior, 1972
|           | Burk, Creighton, 1976
|           | Burlingame, A. L., undated
| Box II:18 | Bush, Vannevar, 1951-1973
|           | (2 folders)
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Stanton, Layton, 1954
Stavely, Homer E., 1955
Stern, Kurt G., 1955
Stever, H. Guyford, 1973-1975

**BOX II:95**
Strain release mechanism, 1976
System Development Corp., 1962

**BOX II:96**
"T" miscellaneous, 1953-1977
(4 folders)
Teal, Gordon K., undated
Technology, 1972
Thurston, map to house, 1965
Tishler, Max, 1971-1974

**BOX II:97**
Tissot, B., 1971
Tufts University, Boston, Mass., commencement address, 1976
Tufts University Visiting Committee, 1975-1977
(5 folders)

**BOX II:98**
Tunnell, George, 1954-1957
Tuve, Merle Antony
  Biography, 1968
  General, 1973
  Papers, undated
"U" miscellaneous, 1957-1974
United States Committee on Unesco, 1972-1975
United States Association for the Club of Rome, 1977
U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, 1975
Unesco
  Harrison, J. M., 1973
  Kramish, Arnold, 1973
  Batisse, M., 1974-1975
  Maheu, Rene, 1973
  Ronner, F., 1972-1973
Union Carbide Corp., 1974
UNISIST, Unesco, 1973-1976

**BOX II:99**
Urey, Harold C., 1954-1966
"V" miscellaneous, 1955-1976
(2 folders)
Vandenbrouke, M., P. Albrecht, and B. Durand, 1976
Verhooogen, Jean, 1954-1956
Vishniac, Wolf, 1954
Vogel, Henry J., 1954-1965
Von Braun, E., of Unesco, 1975
"W" miscellaneous, 1954-1974
(3 folders)

**BOX II:100**
"W" miscellaneous, 1954-1974
(2 folders)
Wallis, W. Allen, 1975
### Part II: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1924-1978

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<td>Washington Academy of Science, 1956-1977 (2 folders)</td>
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<td>BOX II:105-126</td>
<td>Part II: Speeches and Writings, 1937-1978 Articles, scientific papers, speeches, conferences, presentations, and testimony. Arranged chronologically and thereunder alphabetically by title.</td>
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  1963  
  (8 folders) |
| BOX II:107 | 1963  
  (4 folders) |
| BOX II:108 | 1964  
  (10 folders) |
| BOX II:109 | 1964  
  1965  
  (5 folders) |
| BOX II:110 | 1965  
  (6 folders) |
| BOX II:111 | 1966  
  (5 folders) |
| BOX II:112 | 1966  
  (10 folders) |
| BOX II:113 | 1966  
  (7 folders)  
  1967  
  (5 folders) |
| BOX II:114 | 1967  
  (10 folders)  
  1968  
  (8 folders) |
| BOX II:115 | 1968  
  (8 folders) |
| BOX II:116 | 1968  
  (6 folders)  
  1969  
  (7 folders) |
| BOX II:117 | 1969  
  (6 folders)  
  1970  
  (4 folders) |
| BOX II:118 | 1970  
  (6 folders)  
  1971  
  (2 folders) |
| BOX II:119 | 1971  
  (4 folders) |
| BOX II:120 | 1971  
  (6 folders)  
  1972  
  (9 folders) |
| BOX II:121 | 1973  
  (17 folders) |
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**BOX II:127-130**  
**Part II: Notebooks and Reference Material, 1937-1948**  
Scientific notebooks and related printed matter.  
Arranged into biochemistry or geochemistry files and alphabetically thereunder by topic or type of material.

**BOX II:127**  
Biochemistry  
Blood plasma substitute, 1950  
Chronological file set 1  
1937-1948  
(4 folders)  
1949  
Mar.-June  

**BOX II:128**  
July-Nov.  
1950-1952  
(6 folders)  

**BOX II:129**  
Chronological file set 2, 1951-1957, undated  
(6 folders)  

**BOX II:130**  
Cobalt, 1946  
Effect of metal on microorganisms, 1949  
1944  
Geochemistry, ore recovery, 1955  

**BOX II:OV 1**  
**Part II: Oversize, 1984**  
Album of appreciation letters on Abelson's retirement from *Science* magazine.

**BOX II:OV 1**  
Album of appreciation letters, 1984