

Lessing J. Rosenwald Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2005

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm81059469>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms006033>

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2006
Revised 2021 June

Collection Summary

Title: Lessing J. Rosenwald Papers

Span Dates: 1891-1979

Bulk Dates: 1932-1979

ID No.: MSS59469

Creator: Rosenwald, Lessing J. (Lessing Julius), 1891-1979

Extent: 28,000 items

Extent: 81 containers plus 2 oversize

Extent: 32.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm81059469>

Summary: Bibliophile, businessman, and philanthropist. Correspondence, subject files, speeches and writings, printed matter, and miscellany relating to Rosenwald's career with Sears, Roebuck & Company; his activities on behalf of various Jewish causes and his opposition to Zionism; his public service work with the National Recovery Administration and the War Production Board; his various charitable, educational, and cultural philanthropies; and his work as a bibliographer and collector of books and prints.

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

Adler, Cyrus, 1863-1940--Correspondence.

Billikopf, Jacob, 1883-1950--Correspondence.

Bowen, Catherine Drinker, 1897-1973--Correspondence.

Boyd, Julian P. (Julian Parks), 1903-1980--Correspondence.

Clark, Joseph S.--Correspondence.

Dilworth, Richardson, 1898-1974--Correspondence.

Donovan, William J. (William Joseph), 1883-1959--Correspondence.

Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969--Correspondence.

Endicott, H. Wendell (Henry Wendell), 1880-1954--Correspondence.

Flexner, Abraham, 1866-1959--Correspondence.

Frankfurter, Felix, 1882-1965--Correspondence.

Gimbel, Ellis A., 1865-1950--Correspondence.

Goff, Frederick Richmond, 1916-1982--Correspondence.

Greenaway, Emerson, 1906- --Correspondence.

Kollek, Teddy, 1911-2007--Correspondence.

Lazaron, Morris S. (Morris Samuel), 1888-1979--Correspondence.

Lazarus, Fred, 1884-1973--Correspondence.

Lehman, Herbert H. (Herbert Henry), 1878-1963--Correspondence.

Loeb, Jacob M. (Jacob Moritz), 1875-1944--Correspondence.

Mellon, Paul--Correspondence.

Menninger, William Claire, 1899-1966--Correspondence.

Morgenstern, Julian, 1881-1976--Correspondence.

Niebuhr, Reinhold, 1892-1971--Correspondence.

Ormandy, Eugene, 1899-1985--Correspondence.

Pepper, George Wharton, 1867-1961--Correspondence.

Ravdin, Isidore S. (Isidore Schwaner), 1894-1972--Correspondence.

Rockefeller, David, 1915-2017--Correspondence.

Rockefeller, John D., Jr. (John Davison), 1874-1960--Correspondence.

Roosevelt, Eleanor, 1884-1962--Correspondence.

Rosenbach, Philip H. (Philip Hyman), 1863-1953--Correspondence.
Rosenwald, Edith Goodkind--Correspondence.
Rosenwald, Lessing J. (Lessing Julius), 1891-1979.
Rosenwald, William, 1903- --Correspondence.
Solis-Cohen, D. Hays, -1978--Correspondence.
Stern, Horace, 1878-1969--Correspondence.
Stettinius, Edward R., Jr. (Edward Reilly), 1900-1949--Correspondence.
Strauss, Lewis L.--Correspondence.
Truman, Harry S., 1884-1972--Correspondence.
Weinberg, Sidney J. (Sidney James) 1891-1969--Correspondence.
Wolf, Edwin, 1911-1991--Correspondence.
Wood, Robert E. (Robert Elkington), 1879-1969--Correspondence.

Organizations

America First Committee.
American Council for Judaism.
Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons.
International Congress of Bibliophiles.
Julius Rosenwald Fund.
Library of Congress.
National Gallery of Art (U.S.)
Philip H. & A.S.W. Rosenbach Foundation.
Sears, Roebuck and Company.
United States. National Recovery Administration.
United States. War Production Board.

Subjects

Art museums--Washington (D.C.)
Bibliography.
Book collecting.
Charities.
Education--United States.
Emigration and immigration.
Industrial policy--United States.
Isolationism.
Jews--Charities.
Jews--Societies, etc.
National libraries--United States.
Parks--Pennsylvania--Jenkintown.
Prints--Collectors and collecting.
Refugees.
World War, 1939-1945--Economic aspects--United States.
Zionism.

Occupations

Bibliophiles.
Businessmen.
Philanthropists.

Acquisition Information

The papers of Lessing J. Rosenwald, bibliophile, businessman, and philanthropist, were given to the Library of Congress by the Rosenwald estate between 1980 and 1983. The material was received by the Rare Book and Special Collections Division and subsequently transferred to the Manuscript Division.

Processing History

The papers of Lessing J. Rosenwald were arranged and described by Michael McElderry in 1983. The collection and finding aid were revised by Michael McElderry with the assistance of Thomas Bigley in 2005.

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. A recorded tape has been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the Rosenwald Papers.

Related Material

An archive of the collection of illustrated books acquired by Lessing J. Rosenwald and now held by the Library of Congress Rare Book and Special Collections Division is described in a finding aid at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/eadrbc.rb010001>,

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Lessing J. Rosenwald is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Lessing J. Rosenwald 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, Lessing J. Rosenwald Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1891, Feb. 10	Born, Chicago, Ill.
1909-1911	Attended Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.
1913	Married Edith Goodkind
1920	General manager, Sears, Roebuck and Co., Philadelphia plant, Philadelphia, Pa.
1925-1926	Began collecting prints, drawings, and rare books
1928	Executive vice president, Sears, Roebuck and Co.
1931-1932	Vice president, board of directors, and chairman, executive committee, Sears, Roebuck and Co.
1932-1939	Chairman, board of directors, Sears, Roebuck and Co.
1932-1948	Chairman, board of trustees, Julius Rosenwald Fund
1939	Retired from Sears, Roebuck and Co. Opened Alverthorpe Gallery, Jenkintown, Pa.
1941-1943	Director, Conservation Division, War Production Board
1943	Donated print collection to the National Gallery of Art and rare books to the Library of Congress Founder and chairman, American Council for Judaism
1963	Awarded Philadelphia Art Alliance Medal of Achievement

1967	Received Philadelphia Award
	Received Donald F. Hyde Award, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.
1979, June 24	Died, Jenkintown, Pa.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Lessing Julius Rosenwald (1891-1979) span the period 1819-1979, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the years after 1932. The collection documents Rosenwald's activities as a civic leader, influential member of the Jewish community, and well-known collector of prints, drawings, and rare books and is organized in the following series: [Correspondence](#); [Subject File](#); [Sears, Roebuck and Company](#); [Speeches and Writings File](#); [Miscellany](#); and [Oversize](#). The papers reflect Rosenwald's interest in the resettlement of refugees following World War II, the sponsorship of social causes and organizations by the Rosenwald family philanthropies, and the advancement of scholarship through his work as a bibliographer and bookman. Documents collected by Rosenwald from the records of Sears, Roebuck and Company are also included.

Rosenwald's father, Julius, was a philanthropist and president of Sears, Roebuck and Company from 1910 to 1925. Having established a fund in his name in 1917 to further "the well-being of mankind," Julius Rosenwald contributed to the improvement of the educational and living standards of African Americans and was instrumental in establishing more than five thousand rural public schools in the South. Lessing took a similar role and was chairman of the board of trustees of the Julius Rosenwald Fund from the time of his father's death in 1932 until 1948, when the fund was terminated. The [Correspondence](#) series contains a letter to Reinhold Niebuhr, June 4, 1958, outlining Rosenwald's thoughts on the forces that motivated his father's philanthropy as well as correspondence exchanged between Lessing Rosenwald and his father. A small amount of administrative correspondence for the Julius Rosenwald Fund is also in the [Subject File](#).

Rosenwald began his career with [Sears, Roebuck and Company](#) in 1911 as a shipping clerk, assumed positions of increasing responsibility while working his way through various departments of the firm, and, in 1920, moved from Chicago to Philadelphia as general manager of the company's first Eastern plant. In 1932 he assumed control of the company upon his father's death and became chairman of the board, retiring from that position in 1939 in favor of the company president, Robert Elkington Wood. Records in the [Sears, Roebuck and Company](#) series reflect Rosenwald's personal interest in corporate issues such as labor relations and merchandising. Despite his retirement, Rosenwald actively followed the affairs of the company, and the [Correspondence](#) series contains letters exchanged with Wood and other company managers and officers, including Thomas B. McCabe and James M. Barker.

In September 1940 Rosenwald joined the isolationist America First Committee. He soon became disenchanted with the anti-Semitic bias he perceived in several of its members, however, and, while still in accord with its objectives, resigned from the committee the following December. The [Subject File](#) contains material concerning Rosenwald's participation in this organization, including correspondence with Robert Elkington Wood, the committee's chairman, as well as reaction to a speech delivered by Charles A. Lindbergh at Des Moines, Iowa, September 11, 1941, in which the American Jewish community was accused of urging the country toward war.

Before his retirement from Sears, Rosenwald had already contributed time to public service. In 1934 he was appointed industry representative to the Philadelphia Regional Labor Board of the National Recovery Administration, and in October 1940 he held a position on the local Selective Service Board of Appeals. In August 1941 Rosenwald accepted a government appointment to serve as director of the Conservation Division within the War Production Board, a position he held until his resignation in 1943. Both the [Correspondence](#) series and the [Subject File](#) contain information on Rosenwald's contribution to labor arbitration and government service.

Julius Rosenwald had set the political and moral examples which his son would follow throughout his life. Lessing became a prominent member of the Jewish community and, like his father, was opposed to the Zionist movement. In 1943 Rosenwald founded the American Council for Judaism, an organization based on the proposition that Judaism was a religion of universal values, not a nationality. The council rejected the nationalist pattern of Zionism and was therefore opposed to the creation in Palestine of a national Jewish state. The [Correspondence](#) series contains material relating to activities of the council, including letters exchanged with members such as D. Hays Solis-Cohen, Morris S. Lazaron, Isadore M. Scott, Harry Snellenburg, Jr., and I. Edward Tonkon. Also in the series is correspondence from 1945 with Julian

Morgenstern, president of Hebrew Union College, concerning progressive Judaism and an exchange in 1947 with Felix Frankfurter defining Jewish nationalism.

Simultaneous with his duties as chairman of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, Rosenwald extended the family's tradition of philanthropy with the establishment of his own charitable foundation. Through his fund, Rosenwald continued to support the institutions and social agencies that his father had funded, including the University of Chicago, the Museum of Science and Industry, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (formerly the American Jewish Relief Committee). The Lessing Rosenwald Foundation also donated to a wide variety of other organizations as well as funding individual research projects. The [Correspondence](#) series and [Subject File](#) contain information on Rosenwald's support of these and other institutions.

In addition to his philanthropy, Rosenwald's sense of civic responsibility led to his involvement on the national and local level as a member or officer of many charitable, educational, and cultural organizations. Material relating to Rosenwald's civic activities can be found in the [Correspondence](#) series and the [Subject File](#).

Rosenwald was particularly active in support of refugee relief following World War II and was a leading member of the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons, an organization whose goal was the liberalization of refugee and immigration legislation. The [Subject File](#) contains extensive records on the refugee problem and Rosenwald's participation on the committee. Rosenwald held membership on other committees that also supported refugee programs and immigration reform. Material relating to Rosenwald's involvement in these organizations can be found in the [Correspondence](#) series.

In 1958 Rosenwald donated a fifty-four acre tract of his Alverthorpe estate in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, to the local community for use as a recreational park and cultural center. Through further gifts of land, the area was expanded to include over one-hundred acres. A large file detailing the development of Alverthorpe Park is located in the [Subject File](#).

Lessing Rosenwald is perhaps best known as a collector of prints and rare books. In 1943 he donated his print and rare book collections to the National Gallery of Art and the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. Having built a repository, Alverthorpe Gallery, at his estate in Jenkintown, Rosenwald retained physical custody of the collections during his lifetime, periodically transferring selections to Washington for exhibition, and ultimately giving 2,600 rare books and 5,000 reference books to the Library, and 22,000 original prints and 500 drawings to the National Gallery. The [Subject File](#) contains folders on the Library of Congress and the National Gallery of Art and includes material relating to Rosenwald-sponsored exhibitions, as well as a series of architectural blueprints of the Alverthorpe Gallery. Information regarding Rosenwald's activities with the International Congress of Bibliophiles and the Philip H. & A. S. W. Rosenbach Foundation is also in the [Subject File](#). Further items concerning books and bookmen can be found in the [Correspondence](#) series. Other collections of Rosenwald material relating to his activities as a collector are located in the National Gallery of Art, which houses a separate correspondence file, and the Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress, which has retained files documenting Rosenwald's rare book acquisitions.

The [Correspondence](#) series reflects the wide network of family, friends, and acquaintances who corresponded with Rosenwald. Correspondents in the series include Cyrus Adler, Jacob Billikopf, Catherine Drinker Bowen, Julian P. Boyd, Joseph S. Clark, Richardson Dilworth, William J. Donovan, Dwight D. Eisenhower, H. Wendell Endicott, Abraham Flexner, Ellis A. Gimble, Frederick Richmond Goff, Emerson Greenaway, Teddy Kollek, Fred Lazarus (1884-1973), Herbert H. Lehman, Jacob M. Loeb, Paul Mellon, William Claire Menninger, Eugene Ormandy, George Wharton Pepper, Isidore S. Ravdin, David Rockefeller, John D. Rockefeller (1874-1960), Eleanor Roosevelt, Philip H. Rosenbach, Edith Goodkind Rosenwald, William Rosenwald, Horace Stern, Edward R. Stettinius, Lewis L. Strauss, Harry S. Truman, Sidney J. Weinberg, and Edwin Wolf.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in six series:

- [Correspondence, 1899-1979](#)
- [Subject File, 1895-1979](#)
- [Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1892-1979](#)
- [Speeches and Writings File, 1931-1976](#)
- [Miscellany, 1819-1979](#)
- [Oversize, 1959-1964](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-28	<p><u>Correspondence, 1899-1979</u></p> <p>Letters received and copies of letters sent, correspondence between family members, telegrams, postcards, and miscellaneous enclosures.</p> <p>Arranged chronologically by year and therein alphabetically by name of correspondent.</p>
BOX 29-59	<p><u>Subject File, 1895-1979</u></p> <p>Correspondence, memoranda, notes and working papers, reports, minutes of meetings, printed matter, architectural drafts, administrative papers, financial and legal documents, and miscellaneous enclosures.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by subject.</p>
BOX 60-68	<p><u>Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1892-1979</u></p> <p>Records kept by Rosenwald relating to Sears, Roebuck and Co., including corporate and customer correspondence, memoranda, financial and legal documents, administrative papers, printed matter, and miscellany.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by subject.</p>
BOX 68-74	<p><u>Speeches and Writings File, 1931-1976</u></p> <p>Handwritten and typewritten drafts, correspondence, printed copies, notes and working papers, proofs, and miscellany relating to articles, books, and speeches written by Rosenwald.</p> <p>Organized alphabetically by type of material. Articles and books are arranged alphabetically by title; speeches are arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 74-81	<p><u>Miscellany, 1819-1979</u></p> <p>Correspondence between others, address books, appointment calendars, printed matter, notes, cards and invitations, and speeches and writings by others.</p> <p>Arranged alphabetically by type of material.</p>
BOX OV 1-OV 2	<p><u>Oversize, 1959-1964</u></p> <p>Blueprints, cue cards, and a commemorative scroll.</p> <p>Arranged and described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.</p>

Container List

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BOX 1-28	Correspondence, 1899-1979 Letters received and copies of letters sent, correspondence between family members, telegrams, postcards, and miscellaneous enclosures. Arranged chronologically by year and therein alphabetically by name of correspondent.
BOX 1	1899-1936 (6 folders)
BOX 2	1937-1939 (4 folders) 1940 A-K
BOX 3	L-Z and unidentified 1941-1942 (4 folders)
BOX 4	1943-1944 (6 folders)
BOX 5	1945 (3 folders) 1946 A-L (2 folders)
BOX 6	M-Z and unidentified (2 folders) 1947 A-R (3 folders)
BOX 7	S-Z and unidentified 1948 (4 folders)
BOX 8	1949 (4 folders) 1950 A-G
BOX 9	H-Z and unidentified (2 folders) 1951 A-R (3 folders)
BOX 10	S-Z and unidentified 1952 (4 folders) 1953 A-F

Correspondence, 1899-1979

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BOX 11	G-Z (3 folders) 1954 (4 folders) 1955 A-F
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Correspondence, 1899-1979

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BOX 29-59	Subject File, 1895-1979 Correspondence, memoranda, notes and working papers, reports, minutes of meetings, printed matter, architectural drafts, administrative papers, financial and legal documents, and miscellaneous enclosures. Arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX 29	<i>Alice in Wonderland</i> fund, 1946-1949 Alverthorpe Gallery, Jenkintown, Pa. Architectural blueprints, 1938 Nos. 41-58 (4 folders)
BOX 30	Nos. 59-185 (3 folders) Bills and receipts, 1959-1962, 1975 Correspondence, 1959-1960 Bicycle trail and house, 1963-1964, undated
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BOX 32	1960, Aug.-1979, Sept. (5 folders)
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BOX 34	1967-1978 (2 folders) Plans and surveys, 1961-1963

Subject File, 1895-1979

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	Annual reports, 1961-1963, 1976
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	Property inspection report, 1970
	America First Committee, 1940-1941
	American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1927, 1944
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	Amigos de Calle del Cristo 255, 1961-1966
	Birthday greetings
	1941-1960
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BOX 38	1967-1975
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BOX 39	1976
	Committee for the Nation's Health
	Correspondence, 1946-1950
	Printed matter, 1948-1951, undated
	Committee to Defend America, 1940, undated
	Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, 1947-1948
	Crawford, Earl of, 1955-1957
	Curtis, Charlotte, "Rosenwald Busy at Philanthropy," <i>New York Times</i> , 1964
BOX 40	Delegation appointed by the secretary of war to inspect Germany ("Dabsowtig"), reunion, 1949-1958, undated
	Donald F. Hyde Award, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., 1967
	Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, Philadelphia, Pa., 1944
	Eleanor Roosevelt Memorial Foundation, 1964
	Exhibits
	"Early Printed Books of the Low Countries"
	European exhibit
	Arenberg collection, 1955-1960, undated
	Correspondence, 1959-1961
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	International Bibliophiles Association, 1972-1975, undated
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	Jenks, Donald, analysis of higher education, 1950, undated
	Kuh, Katharine, "The Rosenwald Collection," <i>Saturday Review</i> , 1961
	Labor
	Arbitration board for contract between Philadelphia, Pa., and the Municipal Workers Union, 1940
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	Secrest, Meryle, "Lessing Rosenwald, Collector of Great Prints, Rare Books," <i>Smithsonian Magazine</i> , 1972
	Snellenburg, Harry, Jr., bookplate, 1964
	Standata, computer microfilm systems, 1966, undated
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Sears, Roebuck and Company, 1892-1979

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Speeches and Writings File, 1931-1976

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Miscellany, 1819-1979

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