

Alexander Vassiliev Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2014

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2009085460>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms010012>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2013
Revised 2024 February

Collection Summary

Title: Alexander Vassiliev Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1895-2011

Bulk Dates: 1930-1950

ID No.: MSS85460

Creator: Vassiliev, Alexander

Extent: 110 items

Extent: 11 containers

Extent: 4.2 linear feet

Extent: 168 digital files (0.4 GB)

Language: Collection material in English and Russian.

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2009085460>

Summary: Journalist, author, espionage historian, and former KGB operative. Notebooks, file guide, concordance, legal documents, and notes compiled by Vassiliev from KGB files relating to KGB espionage activity in the United States during the 1930s through the early 1950s. Digital files include material relating to VENONA, the code name for the U.S. Army's Signal Intelligence Service's project to analyze and decrypt Soviet communications primarily during World War II.

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

Lowenthal, John, 1925-2003.

Vassiliev, Alexander--Trials, litigation, etc.

Vassiliev, Alexander.

Organizations

Frank Cass & Co.--Trials, litigation, etc.

Soviet Union. Komitet gosudarstvennoĭ bezopasnosti.

United States. Army. Signal Intelligence Service.

Subjects

Cold War.

Cryptography--United States.

Espionage--United States.

Intelligence service--Soviet Union.

World War, 1939-1945--Cryptography.

World War, 1939-1945--Military intelligence--United States.

World War, 1939-1945--Soviet Union.

Places

Soviet Union--Foreign relations--United States.

United States--Foreign relations--Soviet Union.

Titles

Intelligence and national security.

Occupations

Authors.

Historians.

Intelligence officers.

Journalists.

Acquisition Information

The papers of Alexander Vassiliev, author, journalist, espionage historian, and former KGB operative, were given to the Library of Congress by Vassiliev in 2009. Additional material was given to the Library by John Haynes in 2012.

Processing History

The papers of Alexander Vassiliev were originally processed by Kathleen O'Neill in 2010. Digital files and a small addition were processed in 2013. The finding aid was updated in 2013 and 2014.

Digital files were received as part of the Alexander Vassiliev Papers on a variety of storage media, each of which was assigned a unique digital ID number. Use the digital ID number to request access copies of the files associated with each media. A description of the standard processes taken on all born digital records can be found in the Processing History Note: Born Digital Collection Material at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.digital>.

Other Repositories

Digitized versions of the file guide and concordance as well as the original, transcribed, and translated notebooks can be found online as part of the Cold War International History Project on the Woodrow Wilson International Center Web site at <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/collection/86/Vassiliev-Notebooks>

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Alexander Vassiliev in these papers and in other collections in the custody of the Library of Congress is reserved. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division for further information.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Alexander Vassiliev 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. Access to digital content is available onsite only in the Manuscript Reading Room and requires advanced notice. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or digital ID number, Alexander Vassiliev Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1962, May 1	Born, Moscow, Soviet Union
1984	Graduated, M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Faculty of Journalism, International Section, Moscow, Soviet Union
1984-1985	Employed, International Department, <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda Daily</i> , Moscow, Soviet Union
1985	Cadet, Andropov Red Banner Institute, KGB, Moscow, Soviet Union
1987	Graduated, Andropov Red Banner Institute, KGB, Moscow, Soviet Union
1987-1990	Operative, First Department, First Chief Directorate, KGB, Moscow, Soviet Union
1990	Resigned, KGB

1990-1996	Reporter and columnist, <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda Daily</i> , Moscow, Russia
1996	Moved to London, England
1999	Published with Allen Weinstein <i>The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America—The Stalin Era</i> . New York: Random House
2000-2009	Online producer, <i>BBC World Service</i> . Russian Section—Russian Services, London, England
2001	Sued Amazon.com and Frank Cass & Co., publisher of the <i>Intelligence and National Security Journal</i> , London, England for libel (lost the lawsuit in 2003)
2004-2006	Copublisher, editor, and designer, <i>The Hyde Park</i> , London, England
2009	Published with John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr <i>Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America</i> . New Haven: Yale University Press

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Alexander Vassiliev (b. 1962) span the years 1895-2011, with the bulk of the material dating from the 1930s to the early 1950s. The papers are in Russian and English and consist of original notebooks, summary narratives, documents pertaining to *Vassiliev v. Frank Cass & Co.*, and material relating to the VENONA project. The papers are organized into two series: [Paper File](#) and [Digital File](#).

With the exception of the original notebooks, the [Paper File](#) series consists entirely of printouts of the scanned and born-digital material found in the [Digital File](#). The notebooks were created during Vassiliev's work on a book project supported by the Foreign Intelligence Service of Russia (SVR). For this project, he partnered with Allen Weinstein to write a book on KGB operations in the United States. Vassiliev was a former operative in the KGB and the SVR gave him access to KGB files relating to its espionage activity in the United States during the 1930s through the early 1950s. The notebooks, handwritten in Russian, contain Vassiliev's direct transcriptions from these files as well as his margin notes. When Vassiliev left Russia in 1996, he left the notebooks behind and did not retrieve them until 2001. The original notebooks were used in writing *Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America* (2009), coauthored by Vassiliev, John Earl Haynes, and Harvey Klehr. Included with the original notebooks are a file guide, a file concordance, transcripts, and English translations of the notebooks. The transcribed and translated versions duplicate the pagination and page layout of the original handwritten notebooks.

The summary narratives consist of material Vassiliev wrote to comply with restrictions set forth by the SVR. These restrictions prohibited Vassiliev from sharing the original notebooks with Allen Weinstein. Vassiliev, therefore, prepared SVR-screened summary narratives of the notebooks. These sanitized summary narratives in English were used as the basis for the book, *The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America—The Stalin Era* (1999), coauthored with Weinstein. Although the summary narratives are based on the KGB files transcribed in the notebooks, the span dates reflect the events chronicled in the narrative text, not the dates of the transcribed files.

The documents relating to the lawsuit *Vassiliev v. Frank Cass & Co.* include copies of legal documents, correspondence, and trial notes. The libel suit stemmed from an article, "Venona & Alger Hiss" by John Lowenthal, published in 2000 in the journal *Intelligence and National Security*.

An addition to the [Paper File](#) consists of material printed out from digital files donated by John Haynes in 2012 and primarily relates to the VENONA project.

The [Digital File](#) series contains born-digital summary narratives, scans of the original notebooks, file guide, transcriptions and translations of the notebooks, and material relating to the lawsuit *Vassiliev v. Frank Cass & Co.* The addition contains scans of the VENONA cables, an index and concordance to the VENONA materials, as well as scans and translations of the original Vassiliev notebooks. The "Index and Concordance to Alexander Vassiliev's Notebooks and Soviet Cables Deciphered by the National Security Agency's VENONA Project" by John Haynes indexes proper names, cover names, organizational titles, events, and subjects. The digital version of the translated notebooks in the addition are an updated version of the translation files that appear in the Notebooks folder and have revised footnotes as well as other editorial changes.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in two series:

- [Papers File, 1895-2008](#)
- [Digital File, 1895-2011](#)

Description of Series

Container

BOX 1-11

Series

Paper File, 1895-2008

Original notebooks, summary narratives, documents pertaining to Vassiliev v. Frank Cass & Co. and VENONA project cables.

Arranged by topic or type of material.

DF

Digital File, 1895-2011

Scans of the original notebooks, file guide, transcriptions and translations of the notebooks, Vassiliev chapters (summary narratives), and materials relating to the lawsuit Vassiliev v. Frank Cass & Co. Also included is an addition titled "Haynes file" containing scans of the VENONA cables, an index and concordance to the VENONA materials, and translations of the original Vassiliev notebooks. The material is primarily PDF files with the exception of the the Vassiliev chapters which are Windows Microsoft Word documents. The series comprises a total of 168 digital files and 413.4 MB of data.

Arranged by topic or type of material.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-11	Paper File, 1895-2008 Original notebooks, summary narratives, documents pertaining to Vassiliev v. Frank Cass & Co. and VENONA project cables. Arranged by topic or type of material.
BOX 1-4	Notebooks, 1923-2008 <i>See also Digital File, same heading</i>
BOX 1	File guide, undated
BOX 1	File concordance, 2008
BOX 1	Yellow notebooks, undated
BOX 1	No. 1, 1935-1965
BOX 1	Original
BOX 1	Transcribed
BOX 1	Translated
BOX 1	No. 2, 1934-1971
BOX 1	Original
BOX 1	Transcribed
BOX 1	Translated
BOX 1	No. 3, 1934-1957
BOX 1	Original
BOX 1	Transcribed
BOX 1	Translated
BOX 2	No. 4, 1923-1950
BOX 2	Original
BOX 2	Transcribed
BOX 2	Translated
BOX 2	Black notebook, 1932-1954
BOX 2	Original
BOX 2	Transcribed
BOX 2	Translated
BOX 3	White notebooks, undated
BOX 3	No. 1, 1930-1947
BOX 3	Original
BOX 3	Transcribed
BOX 3	Translated
BOX 3	No. 2, 1927-1975
BOX 3	Original
BOX 3	Transcribed
BOX 3	Translated
BOX 4	No. 3, 1934-1951
BOX 4	Original
BOX 4	Transcribed
BOX 4	Translated

Paper File, 1895-2008

Container

Contents

BOX 4	Odd pages, 1928-1949, 1992
BOX 4	Original
BOX 4	Transcribed
BOX 4	Translated
BOX 4-6	Summary narratives, circa 1895-1977 <i>See also Digital File, Vassiliev chapters</i>
BOX 4	Crook, 1934-1940
BOX 4	Double agent (Boris Morros), circa 1895-1957
BOX 4	Enormoz, 1904-1992
BOX 4	Golos-Bentley-Browder, 1907-1951
BOX 4	Golos-Bentley-Browder (addition), 1934-1945
BOX 4	The Hammers, 1917-1972
BOX 5	Information on the United States, 1923-1948
BOX 5	Itshak Akhmerov and "Pal's" group, 1941-1945
BOX 5	Martha Dodd and Alfred Stern, 1924-1975
BOX 5	Operations in the United States
BOX 5	1933-1940
BOX 5	1933-1940 (addition, New York station in the 1930s)
BOX 5	1941-1945
BOX 5	1945-1950
BOX 6	"O.S.S.-NKVD cooperation," 1942-1945
BOX 6	Skeletons in the closet, 1937-1946
BOX 5	Washington sources, 1900-1977 (3 folders)
BOX 6	Alexander Vassiliev v. Frank Cass & Co., 1992-2003 <i>See also Digital File, Trial documents</i>
BOX 6	Correspondence
BOX 6	Vassiliev, 1997-2003
BOX 6	Others, 1992-2000
BOX 6	Court records
BOX 6	2001-2002
BOX 6	2003
BOX 6	Apr.-June
BOX 6	May
BOX 6	June
BOX 6	Interviews, 1992-2003
BOX 6	Notes
BOX 6	2000-2002, undated (2 folders)
BOX 6-11	Addition, Haynes file, VENONA project cables, 1940-1947, 2010 <i>See also Digital File, same heading</i>
BOX 6	Addis Ababa–Bogota KGB, 1944-1947
BOX 6	Canada Trade–Havana KGB, 1943-1947
BOX 6	Istanbul KGB, 1943-1945
BOX 6	Kazvin–KGB circular, 1944-1947
BOX 6	London GRU, 1940-1947 (1 folder)
BOX 7	(2 folders)
BOX 7	London KGB–Meshed Diplomatic, 1942-1946

Paper File, 1895-2008

Container	Contents
BOX 7	Mexico City KGB, 1944-1947 (2 folders)
BOX 7	Montevideo Diplomatic–Montevideo KGB, 1944-1945
BOX 7	New York-Buenos Aires–New York KGB-1941-1942, 1941-1943
BOX 7	New York KGB-1943, 1943 (1 folder)
BOX 8	(1 folder)
BOX 8	New York KGB-1944, 1944 (5 folders)
BOX 9	New York KGB-1945, 1945 (2 folders)
BOX 9	Ottawa Diplomatic–Prague KGB, 1940-1944
BOX 9	San Francisco KGB, 1943-1946 (2 folders)
BOX 9	Sofia KGB, 1941-1947
BOX 9	Special studies, 2010
BOX 9	Stockholm Diplomatic, 1944
BOX 9	Stockholm GRU, 1940-1945 (1 folder)
BOX 10	(1 folder)
BOX 10	Stockholm KGB, 1941-1946 (2 folders)
BOX 10	Stockholm Naval GRU, 1942-1945 (2 folders)
BOX 10	Tokyo Diplomatic–USA Diplomatic, 1942-1946
BOX 10	USA GRU, 1941-1945
BOX 11	USA Naval GRU, 1942-1943 (3 folders)
BOX 11	USA Trade–Washington KGB, 1942-1946
DF	Digital File, 1895-2011 Scans of the original notebooks, file guide, transcriptions and translations of the notebooks, Vassiliev chapters (summary narratives), and materials relating to the lawsuit Vassiliev v. Frank Cass & Co. Also included is an addition titled "Haynes file" containing scans of the VENONA cables, an index and concordance to the VENONA materials, and translations of the original Vassiliev notebooks. The material is primarily PDF files with the exception of the the Vassiliev chapters which are Windows Microsoft Word documents. The series comprises a total of 168 digital files and 413.4 MB of data. Arranged by topic or type of material.
DF	Notebooks, <i>See also Containers 1-4, same heading</i> Digital ID: mss85460_1_1 Concord file (concordance file), 2008-2009 Notebooks (scanned originals), 2005-2006 Notebooks trans (translations and transcriptions), 2008-2009 Trial documents, 2006 <i>See also Container 6, Alexander Vassiliev v. Frank Cass & Co.</i> Digital ID: mss85460_1_1 Vassiliev chapters, 2005 <i>See also Containers 4-6, Summary narratives</i> Digital ID: mss85460_1_1

Digital File, 1895-2011

Container

Contents

Addition, Haynes file, 1940-1947, 2011

Digital ID: mss85460_1_1

Index and concordance, 2011

Transcribed notebooks, 2011

VENONA project cables, 1940-1947 *See also Containers 6-11, same heading*