

Georg Von Békésy Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2012

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm82047019>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms013141>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2013
Revised 2022 October

Collection Summary

Title: Georg Von Békésy Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1928-1972

Bulk Dates: 1955-1970

ID No.: MSS47019

Creator: Von Békésy, Georg, 1899-1972

Extent: 51,300 items

Extent: 119 containers

Extent: 47.6 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/mm82047019>

Summary: Physicist, physiologist, and educator. Chiefly writings and research papers, reports, notes, and other materials, along with some correspondence, printed matter, financial papers, biographical material, subject files, and other papers pertaining primarily to von Békésy's research and writing in the area of speech and hearing and in sensory sciences.

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

Von Békésy, Georg, 1899-1972.

Organizations

University of Hawaii (Honolulu)

Subjects

Archaeology.

Art--Collectors and collecting.

Hearing--Physiological aspects.

Nobel Prizes.

Senses and sensation--Physiological aspects.

Speech--Physiological aspects.

Universities and colleges--Hawaii.

Voyages and travels.

Occupations

Educators.

Physicists.

Physiologists.

Acquisition Information

The papers of Georg Von Békésy, physicist, physiologist, and educator, were given to the Library of Congress by the Nobel Foundation, Stockholm, Sweden, in 1973.

Processing History

The Von Békésy Papers were processed circa 1975 by Joseph Sullivan. The finding aid was revised in 2012.

Transfers

Items have been transferred from the Manuscript Division to other custodial divisions of the Library. Some photographs and slides have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division. Sound recordings and motion pictures have been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division. All transfers are identified in these divisions as part of the Georg Von Békésy Papers.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Georg Von Békésy is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Georg Von Békésy 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, Georg Von Békésy Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

| Date | Event |
|---------------|---|
| 1899, June 3 | Born, Budapest, Hungary |
| 1916-1920 | Student, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland |
| 1923 | Ph.D., University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary |
| 1923-1946 | Worked for Hungarian Post Office |
| 1926-1927 | Researcher, Central Laboratory, Siemens and Halske A.G., Berlin, Germany |
| 1932-1946 | Taught, University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary |
| 1946-1949 | Research professor, Karolinski Institute, Stockholm, Sweden |
| 1947 | Immigrated to the United States |
| 1947-1949 | Research lecturer, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. |
| 1949-1966 | Senior research fellow in psychophysics, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. |
| 1961 | Awarded Nobel Prize in Medicine |
| 1966-1972 | Professor of sensory sciences, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii |
| 1972, June 13 | Died, Honolulu, Hawaii |

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Georg Von Békésy (1899-1972) span the years 1928-1972, with the bulk of the material consisting of speeches, writings, and research material from 1955 to 1970. The collection is organized into five series: [Correspondence](#), [Speeches and Writings File](#), [Subject File](#), [Research Material](#), and [Miscellany](#).

The [Correspondence](#) series includes a small number of family letters, but chiefly concerns Von Békésy's activities in education, scientific research, writing, travels, and his interest in archaeology and art collecting. The [Speeches and Writings File](#) consists of published, typewritten, and handwritten drafts of speeches, lectures, and books with accompanying correspondence and background material.

Von Békésy traveled extensively attending conferences, delivering papers, and visiting research laboratories, universities, and art museums. Included in the [Subject File](#) are travel itineraries, copies of speeches, related correspondence, and topical files ranging from acoustica to *Wettstreit* (competition). A subsequent series of [Research Material](#) is unorganized.

The [Miscellany](#) series contains various biographical and personal materials, including items associated with Von Békésy receiving the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1961.

Arrangement of the Papers

The collection is arranged in five series:

- [Correspondence, 1945-1972](#)
- [Speeches and Writings File, circa 1928-1972](#)
- [Subject File, circa 1940-1972](#)
- [Research Material, circa 1940-1972](#)
- [Miscellany, circa 1945-1972](#)

Description of Series

| Container | Series |
|------------------|--|
| BOX 1-20 | <p><u>Correspondence, 1945-1972</u></p> <p>Letters received and copies of letters sent including telegrams, postcards, and carbon copies with miscellaneous enclosures. Arranged chronologically by year.</p> |
| BOX 21-51 | <p><u>Speeches and Writings File, circa 1928-1972</u></p> <p>Drafts and published copies of books, articles, speeches, and lectures, with related correspondence, notes, outlines, and other background material. Books and articles are arranged alphabetically by title of work. Unidentified writings and miscellaneous lectures and speeches conclude the series.</p> |
| BOX 52-81 | <p><u>Subject File, circa 1940-1972</u></p> <p>Correspondence, memoranda, notes, reports, and printed matter relating chiefly to Von Békésy's research, travels, and public speaking. Arranged alphabetically by subject, scientific topic, or organization.</p> |
| BOX 82-112 | <p><u>Research Material, circa 1940-1972</u></p> <p>Research reports and data, memoranda, notes, correspondence, printed matter, and miscellaneous material. Unarranged.</p> |
| BOX 113-119 | <p><u>Miscellany, circa 1945-1972</u></p> <p>Awards, certificates and honorary degrees, biographical material, financial papers, and other miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.</p> |

Container List

| Container | Contents |
|------------------|---|
| BOX 1-20 | Correspondence, 1945-1972 Letters received and copies of letters sent including telegrams, postcards, and carbon copies with miscellaneous enclosures. Arranged chronologically by year. |
| BOX 1 | 1945-1951 (7 folders) |
| BOX 2 | 1953-1959 (7 folders) 1960 (1 folder) |
| BOX 3 | (5 folders) |
| BOX 4 | (5 folders) |
| BOX 5 | (1 folder) 1962 (4 folders) |
| BOX 6 | (3 folders) 1963 (2 folders) |
| BOX 7 | (3 folders) 1964 (2 folders) |
| BOX 8 | (3 folders) 1965 (2 folders) |
| BOX 9 | (5 folders) |
| BOX 10 | (1 folder) 1966 (4 folders) |
| BOX 11 | (3 folders) 1967 (2 folders) |
| BOX 12 | (5 folders) |
| BOX 13 | 1968 (5 folders) |
| BOX 14 | (2 folders) 1969 (3 folders) |
| BOX 15 | (3 folders) 1970 (2 folders) |
| BOX 16 | (3 folders) 1971 (2 folders) |

Correspondence, 1945-1972

| Container | Contents |
|-----------|--|
| BOX 17 | (4 folders) |
| BOX 18 | 1972 (3 folders) Undated (2 folders) |
| BOX 19-20 | Reprint requests, circa 1950-1972 |
| BOX 21-51 | Speeches and Writings File, circa 1928-1972 Drafts and published copies of books, articles, speeches, and lectures, with related correspondence, notes, outlines, and other background material. Books and articles are arranged alphabetically by title of work. Unidentified writings and miscellaneous lectures and speeches conclude the series. |
| BOX 21 | Publication lists of Von Békésy Abweichungen vom ohmschen gesetz der Frequenzauflösung beim Hören, 1961 Apparent Image Rotation in Stereoscopic Vision, 1969 (8 folders) |
| BOX 22 | Apparent Size and Location of a Sound Source as an Important Part of the Dynamics of a Musical Performance, 1970 (2 folders) Are Surgical Experiments on Human Subjects Necessary?, 1961 The Artistic Approach and the Scientific Approach [1961?] Auditory Backward Inhibition in Concert Halls, 1970 |
| BOX 23 | The Auditory System [in Handbook of Sensory Physiology, Vol. 5], 1971 Bemerkungen zur Theorie der günstigsten Nachhalldauer von Räumen, 1931 Brightness Distribution across the Mach Bands and the Linearity Range of Sensory Nervous Interaction, 1967 (5 folders) |
| BOX 24 | (1 folder) Can We Feel the Nervous Discharges of the End Organs during Vibratory Stimulation of the Skin?, 1961 The Coarse Pattern of the Electrical Resistances in the Cochlea of the Guinea Pig, 1950 The Coming Information Explosion, 1968 Comments on the Measurement of the Relative Size of DC Potentials and Microphonics in the Cochlea, 1961 Compensation Method to Measure the Contrast Produced by Contours, 1972 (3 folders) |
| BOX 25 | Concerning the Fundamental Component of Periodic Pulse Patterns and Modulated Vibrations Observed on the Cochlear Model with Nerve Supply, 1961 Concerning the Pleasures of Observing, and the Mechanics of the Inner Ear, 1962 Creativity in Horizontal and Vertical Buildings, 1971 Current Status of Theories of Hearing, 1956 D-C Potentials and Energy Balance of the Cochlear Partition [undated] Description of Some Mechanical Properties of the Organ of Corti, 1953 The Doctor of Medicine and the Doctor of Philosophy, 1969 Duplexity Theory of Taste, 1964 The Ear, 1957 The Early History of Hearing; Observations and Theories, 1948 |

Speeches and Writings File, circa 1928-1972

Container

Contents

| | |
|--------|---|
| | The Effect of Adaptation on the Taste Threshold Observed with a Semiautomatic Gustometer, 1965 |
| | Enlarged Mechanical Model of the Cochlea with Nerve Supply, 1964 (3 folders) |
| BOX 26 | Die Erweiterung der Existenz der Mach-Bänder auf andere Sinnesgebiete, 1966 (3 folders) |
| | Experiments in Hearing, 1956 |
| | Experimental Models of the Cochlea with and without Nerve Supply [undated] |
| | Experiments in Hearing, 1956 (2 folders) |
| BOX 27 | (2 folders) |
| BOX 28 | (1 folder) |
| | Fechner's Law and the Vestibular Organ [undated] |
| | Feedback Phenomena between the Stringed Instrument and the Musician, 1968 |
| | Die Flucht in das Gebiet der Modelle [undated] |
| | Fortschritte der Hörphysiologie, 1936 |
| | Funneling in the Nervous System and Its Role in Loudness and Sensation Intensity on the Skin, 1958 |
| | The Gap between the Hearing of External and Internal Sounds, 1962 |
| BOX 29 | Die gegenseitige Hemmung von Sinnersreizen bei kleinen Zeitdifferenzen, 1964 |
| | Hearing, 1971 (5 folders) |
| | Hearing Theories and Complex Sounds, 1962 |
| | Human Skin Perception of Traveling Waves Similar to Those on the Cochlea, 1955 |
| | The Influence of Inhibition on the Sensation Pattern of the Skin and the Eye [undated] |
| | Inhibition and the Time and Spatial Patterns of Neural Activity in Sensory Perception, 1965 |
| | Inhibition as an Important Part of Sensory Perception, 1969 |
| | Interaction of Paired Sensory Stimuli and Conduction in Peripheral Nerves, 1963 |
| | Lateral Inhibition of Heat Sensations on the Skin, 1962 |
| | Lines That Do Not Increase Their Width under a Magnifying Glass, 1972 |
| BOX 30 | Localization of Visceral Pain and Other Sensations before and after Anesthesia, 1970 (4 folders) |
| | Location of Maxima and Minima in Sensation Patterns Influenced by Lateral Inhibition, 1968 (4 folders) |
| BOX 31 | Mach and Hering-Type Lateral Inhibition in Vision, 1968 (3 folders) |
| | Mach Bands Measured by a Compensation Method, 1972 (2 folders) |
| | Mach Band-Type Lateral Inhibition in Different Sense Organs, 1966 (3 folders) |
| BOX 32 | The Magnitude of the Vibration Sensation and its Objective Measurement [undated] (2 folders) |
| | Mechanical Frequency Analysis in the Cochleas of Various Animals, 1950 |
| | Micromanipulator with Four Degrees of Freedom, 1950 |
| | Microphonics Produced by Rouching the Cochlear Partition with a Vibrating Electrode [undated] |
| | Missing Fundamental and Periodically Detection in Hearing, 1971 (3 folders) |

Speeches and Writings File, circa 1928-1972

| Container | Contents |
|-----------|---|
| BOX 33 | Ein Modell der mechanischen und nervösen Vorgäng des innernohres, 1968 (4 folders) Modification of Sensory Localization as a Consequence of Oxygen Intake and Reduced Blood Flow, 1963 My Experiences in Research Laboratories from 1923 to 1945, 1970 Neural Funneling along the Skin and between the Inner and Outer Hair Cells of the Cochlea, 1959 Neural Inhibitory Units of the Eye and Skin, 1960 Neural Volleys and the Similarity between Some Sensations Produced by Tones and by Skin Vibrations, 1957 Neuro-mechanisches Modell des Innenohres, 196? A New Method of Perfusion for the Fixation of Tissues, 1961 Olfactory Analogue to Directorial Hearing, 1964 On the Resonance Curve and the Decay Period at Various Points on the Cochlear Partition [undated] Pendulums, Traveling Waves, and the Cochlea, 1958 Physikalische Probleme der Hörphysiologie, 1935 Pitch Sensation and Its Relation to the Periodicity of the Stimulus, Hearing and Skin Vibrations, 1960 Preparatory and Air-Driven Micromanipulators for Electro Physiology, 1956 |
| BOX 34 | Problems relating Psychological and Electrophysiological Observations in Sensory Perception, 1967 (4 folders) Processing of Contradictory Information in the Ear and Eye, 1970 Psychological Experiments on Sensory Inhibition [undated] (2 folders) |
| BOX 35 | Psychology of the Horizontal and the Vertical Line in Art and Architecture, 1968 Resonance in the Cochlea?, 1970 (3 folders) Resting Potential Inside the Cochlear Partition of the Guinea Pig, 1952 Rhythmical Variations Accompanying Gustatory Stimulation Observed by Means of Localization Phenomena, 1964 Sensations on the Skin Similar to Directional Hearing Beats, and Harmonics of the Ear, 1957 Sense Organs and Their Sensitivity, 1971 (3 folders) |
| BOX 36 | Sensory Inhibition, 1967 Shearing Microphonics Produced by Vibrations Near the Inner and Outer Hair Cells, 1953 Similarities between Hearing and Skin Sensations, 1959 Similarities of Inhibition on the Different Sense Organs, 1969 (4 folders) |
| BOX 37 | Sitzung der mathematisch-naturwissenschaftlichen Klasse vom 3. Juli 1941, 1941 The Smallest Time Difference the Eyes Can Detect with Sweeping Stimulation, 1969 (4 folders) Some Auditory Phenomena Similar to the Moon Illusion, 1949 Some Biophysical Experiments from 50 Years Ago [undated] Some Electro-Mechanical Properties of the Organ of Corti, 1954 |
| BOX 38 | Some of the Feedback Phenomena between the String Instrument and the Musician, 1968 (4 folders) |

Speeches and Writings File, circa 1928-1972

| Container | Contents |
|-----------|---|
| | Some Similarities in Sensory Perception of Fish and Man in Lateral Line Detection, 1967 (3 folders) |
| BOX 39 | The Structure of the Middle Ear and the Hearing of One's Own Voice by Bone Conduction, 1948 |
| | Success and Failure of Teamwork in Biology and Medicine, 1970 (3 folders) |
| BOX 40 | Suggestions for Determining the Mobility of the Stapes by Means of an Endoscope for the Middle Ear, 1950 |
| | Sur la Réverbération Optimum des Petites Salles, 1936 |
| | Sweetness Produced Electrically on the Tongue and Its Relation to Taste Theories, 1964 |
| | Synchronism of Neural Discharges and Their Demultiplication in Pitch Perception on the Skin and in Hearing, 1959 |
| | Synchrony between Nervous Discharges and Periodic Stimuli in Hearing and on the Skin, 1962 |
| | Taste Theories and the Chemical Stimulation of Single Papillae, 1965 (3 folders) |
| BOX 41 | Temperature Co-efficients of the Electrical Thresholds of Taste Sensations, 1965 (2 folders) |
| | Three Experiments Concerned with Pitch Perception, 1962 |
| | Time and Spatial Patterns of Neural Activity in Sensory Perception, 1965 |
| | Two Different Ways of Making Progress in Physics and Medicine [undated] (3 folders) |
| | Über akustische Reizung des Vestibularapparates, 1935 |
| | Über das Fechnersche Gesetz und seine Bedeutung für die Theorie der akustischen Beobachtungsfehler und die Theorie des Hörens, 1930 |
| | Über das Hören der eigenen Stimme, 1941 |
| | Über den Knall and die Theorie des Hörens, 1933 |
| | Über die Empfindlichkeit des stehenden und stizenden Menschen gegen sinusförmige Erschütterungen beim Hören, 1938 |
| | Über die Frequenzauflösung in der menschlichen Schnecke [undated] |
| | Über die Gleichartigkeit einiger nervöser Prozesse beim Hören und Vibrationssinn, 1960 |
| BOX 42 | Über die Grunderscheinungen der Schwingungslehre und Akustik [undated] |
| | Über die Hörsamkeit der Ein- und Ausschwingvorgänge mit Berücksichtigung der Raumakustik, 1933 |
| | Über die Hörsamkeit kleiner Musikräume, 1934 |
| | Über die Hörschwelle und Fühlgrenze langsamer sinusförmiger Luftdruckschwankungen, 1936 |
| | Über die Lokalisation eines Reizes [undated] |
| | Über die mechanisch-akustischen Vorgänge beim Hören, 1939 |
| | Über die mechanische Frequenzanalyse einmaliger Schwingungsvorgänge und die Bestimmung der Frequenz-abhängigkeit von Übertragungssystemen und Impedanzen mittels Ausgleichvorgängen, 1937 |
| | Über die Messung der Schwingungsamplitude der Gehörknöchelchen mittels einer kapazitiven Sonde, 1941 |
| | Über die Mondillusion, 1949 |
| | Über die photoelektrische Fourier-Analyse eines gegebenen Kurvenzuges [undated] |
| | Über die piezoelektrische Messung der absoluten Hörschwelle bei Knochenleitung, 1939 |
| | Über die mechanische Frequenzanalyse einmaliger Schwingungsvorgänge und die Bestimmung der Frequenz-abhängigkeit von Übertragungssystemen und Impedanzen mittels Ausgleichvorgängen, 1937 |

Speeches and Writings File, circa 1928-1972

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|-----------|--|
| | Über die Messung der Scwingungsamplitude der Gehörchelchen mittels einer kapazitiven Sonde, 1941 |
| | Über die Mondillusion, 1949 |
| | Über die photoelektrische Fourier-Analyse eines gegebenen Kurvenzuges [undated] |
| | Über die piezoelktrische Messung der absoluten Hörschwelle bei Knochenleitung, 1939 |
| | Über die Resonanzkurve und die Abklingzeit der verschiedenen Stellen der Schneckentrennwand, 1943 |
| | Über die Schallausbreitung bei Knochenleitung, 1940 |
| | Über die Stärke der Vibrationsempfindung und ihre objektive Messung, 1940 |
| | Über die Vibrationsempfindung, 1939 |
| | Über ein neues Audiometer, 1947 |
| BOX 43 | Über wissenschaftliche Forschungsmethoden und ihre Parallelen in der Kunst [undated] (2 folders) |
| | The Variation of Phase along the Basilar Membrane with Sinusoidal Vibrations, 1947 |
| | Vibration of the Cochlear Partition in Anatomical Preparations and in the Models of the Inner Ear [undated] |
| | Vibration of the Head in a Sound Field and Its Role in Hearing by Bone Conduction, 1948 |
| | Visual Inhibition and Some Yellow Filter Effects, 1968 |
| | Wave Motion in an Inhomogeneous System (film text) |
| | Zur Theorie des Hörens, 1928 |
| BOX 44-46 | Unidentified writings (10 folders) |
| BOX 47-51 | Miscellaneous speeches and lectures (25 folders) |
| BOX 52-81 | Subject File, circa 1940-1972 Correspondence, memoranda, notes, reports, and printed matter relating chiefly to Von Békésy's research, travels, and public speaking. Arranged alphabetically by subject, scientific topic, or organization. |
| BOX 52 | Acoustica Aging American Speech and Hearing Association Ausprechteit Békésy audiometer |
| BOX 53 | Colon Color: vision Diamond, A. Leonard Echo Edge and onset Electroencephalography Electric shop |
| BOX 54 | Elektrisch Erlangen Focus Fish (4 folders) |
| BOX 55 | (1 folder) |

Subject File, circa 1940-1972

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| | Fragen |
| | Florida |
| | Friction (2 folders) |
| | Frog |
| | H-Program |
| | Harvard University |
| BOX 56 | Hearing |
| | Hören-Pulfrich |
| | Ideas (2 folders) |
| | Illusion (5 folders) |
| BOX 57 | Intensity change |
| | Kiedel, W. D. (2 folders) |
| | Kneejerk |
| | Kodak |
| | L.A. Lab |
| | Liquid crystals |
| BOX 58 | Mach band Compensation (11 folders) |
| BOX 59 | Micromanipulation |
| | Microphonics |
| | National Academy of Sciences |
| | National Institutes of Health (3 folders) |
| BOX 60 | (2 folders) |
| | National Science Foundation (2 folders) |
| | Onset and offset phenomena |
| BOX 61 | Pattern recognition |
| | Perspective |
| | Photography (3 folders) |
| | Plasticity (5 folders) |
| | Princeton University Press (3 folders) |
| | Pulfrich Phenomenon |
| BOX 62 | Ranke, Otto F. |
| | Reports (research and departmental miscellany) |
| BOX 63 | Research grants |
| BOX 64 | Residue (5 folders) |
| BOX 65 | Sensation magnitude |

Subject File, circa 1940-1972

| Container | Contents |
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| | Skin (3 folders) |
| BOX 66 | Spider Staining Stevens, S. S. Suction (3 folders) |
| BOX 67-69 | Taste (16 folders) |
| BOX 70 | Travel Ann Arbor-Brussels (14 folders) |
| BOX 71 | Buenos Aires-Córdoba (7 folders) |
| BOX 72 | Dallas-Frankfurt (14 folders) |
| BOX 73 | Halle-Kansas (12 folders) |
| BOX 74 | Los Angeles-London (14 folders) |
| BOX 75 | Mexico-New Orleans (9 folders) |
| BOX 76 | New York-Paris (15 folders) |
| BOX 77 | Philadelphia-St. Louis (18 folders) |
| BOX 78 | San Diego-Toronto (17 folders) |
| BOX 79 | Tübingen-Zurich (7 folders) Miscellaneous (7 folders) |
| BOX 80 | (2 folders) |
| | Trilogy Tripel response (2 folders) |
| BOX 81 | University of Hawaii (4 folders) Vestibular Model Vallatae Vibrator Violin (3 folders) Vorhang effect |

Subject File, circa 1940-1972

| Container | Contents |
|-------------|---|
| | Wettstreit |
| BOX 82-112 | Research Material, circa 1940-1972 Research reports and data, memoranda, notes, correspondence, printed matter, and miscellaneous material. Unarranged. |
| BOX 82-112 | Miscellaneous |
| BOX 113-119 | Miscellany, circa 1945-1972 Awards, certificates and honorary degrees, biographical material, financial papers, and other miscellaneous material. Arranged alphabetically by type of material. |
| BOX 113 | Awards, certificates, and honorary degrees (4 folders and 2 vols.) |
| BOX 114 | Biographical material, passports, etc. (2 folders) Financial papers Bills and receipts (2 folders) Medical bills |