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The University Archives
and Records Center

A Guide to the
Edwin Wolf II Papers
1940-1984

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UPT 50 W853

Prepared by Timothy H. Horning

October 2015

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PROVENANCE

The Edwin Wolf II papers came into the possession of the University Archives at an unknown date and were formally accessioned in 1996 (accession number 1996: 13).

ARRANGEMENT

The Edwin Wolf II papers are arranged alphabetically.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Edwin Wolf II was an expert on rare books, an author and historian of Colonial America, a leader in Philadelphia's Jewish community, and librarian of the Library Company of Philadelphia from 1955 to 1984.

Edwin Wolf II was born on December 6, 1911 to Morris Wolf and Paula Binswanger Wolf. He graduated from the William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia in 1927 at age 15 and then studied

at the Bedales School in England. Upon his return from England in 1930 Wolf began working at the Rosenbach Company, a rare book and manuscript dealer founded by Abraham S. W. Rosenbach. It was here that Wolf learned bibliographical description and cataloging of rare books. Wolf left the employ of the Rosenbach Company in 1943 to join the United States Army during World War II. He was sent to Europe where he assisted in the recovery of ancient and rare books that had been plundered and subsequently hidden by the Nazis. He returned to the Rosenbach Company in 1946 and made a name for himself as a scholar in his own right through the publication of numerous articles and exhibition catalogues. He also fostered collaborative projects with other Philadelphia historical institutions such as the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the American Philosophical Society. He became President of the Friends of the University of Pennsylvania Library in 1947.

In 1952 Wolf joined the Library Company of Philadelphia as a consultant and advisor. Founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin, the Library Company is one of the nation's premier collections of historically significant manuscripts and printed materials. Wolf recommended that the Library Company cease circulation of its holdings and instead become a research library specializing in American history to 1880 and that the building the Library Company occupied at 901 S. Broad Street be vacated as it was deteriorating and not suitable for the storage of valuable books and manuscripts. Wolf was named Curator of the Library Company in 1953 to carry about this plan. He was subsequently named Librarian in 1955. He successfully petitioned the Philadelphia Orphan's Court in 1960 to let the Library Company move from 901 S. Broad Street to a new building at 1314 Locust Street. Wolf is often credited with lifting the Library Company out of "genteel neglect" and into an "era of revitalized prominence."

Edwin Wolf II married Margaret "Peggy" Gimbel Dannenbaum in 1934 with whom he had three children, Ellen, Anthony and Mary. Margaret Wolf died in a car accident in 1964. In 1965 Edwin Wolf II married for a second time, this time to Mary Paxson Matthews, who had four children from a previous marriage. Edwin Wolf II died on February 20, 1991 at the age of 79.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Edwin Wolf II papers are mostly made up of a draft of *A Faculty Survey of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries* (1940). The survey was undertaken by effort the Bibliographical Planning Committee of the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area, a joint committee of the University

of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Bibliographic Center and Union Library Catalogue. The survey consists of appraisals of the university's library collections in several fields of knowledge written by faculty members who were considered experts in their respective fields. Its purpose was to show areas where the libraries existing collection was strong or weak and to assist in future acquisitions of material. It was also hoped that the survey would assist non-University of Pennsylvania libraries "as a check list upon existing resources" and that it would serve as a pattern of survey for other libraries in the Philadelphia area. It is unclear how or why this draft of the survey came into Wolf's possession since is not listed as a contributor, though it is possible that it was through his association with the Rosenbach Company at the time or simply because he was an active Philadelphia bibliophile.

The other material in the papers pertain to Wolf's involvement with the Friends of the University Library, of which he served as President from 1947 to 1953, and the Committee for a Bicentennial of the University of Pennsylvania Library.

CONTROLLED ACCESS HEADINGS

Geographic Name(s)

- Library Company of Philadelphia.

Occupation(s)

- Authors, American.
- Historians--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

Personal Name(s)

- Wolf, Edwin II, 1911-1991

Subject(s)

- Library administration--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

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INVENTORY

PAPERS	Box	Folder
Committee for the Bicentennial of the University of Pennsylvania Library 1950-1951	1	1
Faculty Survey of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries (draft) 1940 (1)	1	2
Faculty Survey of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries (draft) 1940 (2)	1	3
Faculty Survey of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries (draft) 1940 (3)	1	4
Faculty Survey of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries (draft) 1940 (4)	1	5
Faculty Survey of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries (draft) 1940 (5)	1	6
Friends of the University of Pennsylvania Library 1947-1949	1	7
Friends of the University of Pennsylvania Library 1950-1952, 1958-1960	1	8