

Mortimer Jerome Adler:

An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Adler, Mortimer Jerome, 1902-2001
Title	Mortimer Jerome Adler Papers
Dates:	1939-1944
Extent	3 boxes (1.26 linear feet)
Abstract:	American philosopher, author, and educator Jerome Adler has published an impressive list of titles. His papers contain correspondence and manuscript materials which document the creation and publication of <i>How to Read a Book</i> (1940) and <i>How to Think About War and Peace</i> (1943).
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-00032
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-0032
Language:	English.
Access	Open for research. Part or all of this collection is housed off-site and may require up to three business days notice for access in the Ransom Center's Reading and Viewing Room. Please contact the Center before requesting this material: reference@hrc.utexas.edu

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchases, 1962-1964 (R1280, R1814); gift, 2009 (2009-05-001-G)
Processed by	Caroline M. Allen and Elizabeth B. Buenker, 12/2/92; Revised by David Hatfield Sparks, September 1993; Revised by Hagan Barber, 2012
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Mortimer Jerome Adler, born 1902 in New York City, is an American philosopher, educator, and author. He began his career as a secretary and copywriter for the *New York Sun* and through a program of formal and self education was awarded a PhD from Columbia University (1928). Adler, who became associate professor there in 1930, continued to participate in the Honors program, instituted by John Erskine, which focused on the reading of the classics. His tenure at Columbia included study with such eminent thinkers as Erskine and John Dewey. This kind of environment inspired not only his interest in reading and the study of the "great" books of "Western Civilization," but his insistence on the establishment of an integrated philosophy of science, literature, and religion.

It was this combination of interests that dominated his career at schools and research institutions such as the University of Chicago, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Institute for Philosophical Research, and the Aspen Institute, the last two of which he helped establish. Adler was also a board member of the Ford Foundation and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, whose policies and programs he helped guide and significantly influence.

In 1930 he was appointed to the Philosophy faculty at the University of Chicago. Because of the innovations he proposed for the curriculum, his appointment led to a conflict with the faculty. These changes were based on Adler's central interests in the reading, discussion and analysis of "classic" literature and an integrated philosophical approach to the study of separate disciplines. By 1931 these "interdepartmental wars" resulted in Adler's reassignment to the Law School as Professor of Philosophy of Law. While he continued his educational reforms on a more conservative basis, the concept of seminars on "great books" and "great ideas" continued to gain inroads at other universities. In 1952, his work culminated in the publication by *Britannica* of the "Great Books and Great Ideas" series.

His earliest work resulted in the publication of *Dialectic* (1927), which focused on a summation of the great philosophical and religious ideas of "Western Civilization" -- ideas influenced by his fascination with medieval thought and sensibility. The work on which he had concentrated since his Columbia University days, together with a lecture series and essays produced in Chicago, resulted in several publications: *The Higher Learning in America* (1936), *What Man Has Made of Man: A Study of the Consequences of Platonism and Positivism in Psychology* (1937), *Art and Prudence: A Study in Practical Philosophy* (1937) and, in December 1940, *How to Read a Book: The Art of Getting A Liberal Education*. His interest in the liberal education of the "common man" came to fruition in *How to Read a Book*.

How to Think About War and Peace (1943), written in the political and social climate of the Second World War, continued his advocacy of a popular, yet intelligent approach to public education. Adler met life-long friend Clifton "Kip" Fadiman in a great books seminar taught by Adler at Columbia University. Fadiman later became an editor at Simon and Schuster, a literary critic for *The New Yorker* as well as the author of

numerous essays and books. While corresponding with Adler throughout the writing of the book, he supplied, in 1943, the preface, "A Plea to the Reader, " for *How to Think about War and Peace*.

Adler has written voluminously throughout his career, consistently focusing on a cross-disciplinary and integrated philosophy of law, politics, religion, and education. Other books that reflect this theme include: *The Common Sense of Politics* (1971), *Six Great Ideas: Truth, Beauty, Justice, Liberty: Ideas We Judge By, Ideas We Act On* (1981), and *The Paideia Program: An Educational Syllabus* (1984). More recently he has been involved in creating video programs with Bill Moyers which focus on the subject of the Constitution and biographies of the justices of the Supreme Court. In 1992 he published a continuation of his autobiography *Philosopher at Large* (1977) entitled *A Second Look in the Rearview Mirror: Further Autobiographical Reflections of a Philosopher at Large*. In 1993 he published *The Four Dimensions of Philosophy: Metaphysical, Moral, Objective, Categorical*. The main criticism of his work remains the narrow focus and definition (Anglo-American, European and male) that he gives to "greatness."

The Mortimer J. Adler Papers were donated by Adler and Fadiman to the Harry Ransom Center in two parts: the *How to Read a Book* papers in 1962 and the *How to Think about War and Peace* papers in 1963.

Scope and Contents

The papers of Mortimer Jerome Adler, 1939-1944 (3 boxes), consist of correspondence and manuscripts which document the writing, editing, publishing, and publication of two works, *How to Read a Book* (1940) and *How to Think about War and Peace* (1943). The papers are arranged in two series: *How to Read a Book*, 1939-1940 (2 boxes) and *How to Think about War and Peace*, 1943-1944 (1 box). Each series is divided into two subseries, A. Correspondence and B. Manuscripts.

The bulk of the correspondence concerning *How to Read a Book* provides a profile of the book's production, title selection, legal matters, publicity, and sales. Adler's correspondence with M. Lincoln Schuster and Jerome Weidman, both of Simon & Schuster, and Clifton "Kip" Fadiman reflect personal as well as professional relationships. The large amount of correspondence from reviewers, educators, and general readers provides a limited sample of public reaction to the book. The correspondence is grouped within subject headings. Letters found in folders 1.1-1.3, which relate to publication and publicity, are filed chronologically, while those found in folders 1.4-1.7, comprising reviews and letters from readers, are filed alphabetically. One second printing copy and one seventh printing copy of *How to Read a Book* were removed from the collection and cataloged for the HRC book collection.

The correspondence found in the second series, *How to Think about War and Peace*, is between Adler, Clifton Fadiman, and Simon & Schuster, his publishing company. This correspondence provides insight into the intellectual formulation of the book. There is, in addition, correspondence concerning Fadiman's writing and editing of the preface as well as critiques of the book from various scholars. This material is also arranged chronologically within subject headings, except for the letters between Adler and E. B. White (7 items) which have been separated from the other correspondence. One first edition has been removed and cataloged for the HRC book collection.

While the bulk of these papers concern the publication and sales of *How to Read a Book* (1940) and *How to Think about War and Peace* (1943), there is also correspondence which discusses the editing and criticism of the ideas advocated in the books. Among these ideas and subjects are: a "correct" and informed style of reading, classic literature, liberal education and humanist studies in general, global government and politics, the philosophy of war and peace, and the socio-economic conditions under which an educated public and a universal peace might flourish. Significant correspondents include: Jacques Barzun, T.T. Bevans, Bennett Cerf, Stuart Chase, Clifton Fadiman, Waldeman Gurian, Quincy Howe, Walter Lippman, Henry R. Luce, Jacques Maritain, M. Lincoln Schuster, Leon Shimfin, Richard Simon, Jerome Weidman, and E. B. White. A list of all correspondents in the Adler Papers is located at the end of this inventory.

New Acquisition

In 2009, a letter from Mortimer Adler to Gilbert Seldes, dated 19 April, was acquired.

Related Material

For other Adler materials located in the HRC, see the following manuscript collections:

- Harpers - Letters
- Wallace, M. - Works, Recip.

Other holdings of the manuscript materials of Mortimer Adler are found in the following collections:

- Syracuse University - George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, Manuscript Collections,
- Mortimer Jerome Adler Papers, 1937-1966 (RLIN Record No. NXSV322-A).
- University of Chicago Library - Records of the Committee to Frame a World Constitution, 1945-1951 (National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections, 1963-1964, MS 64-72).
- University of Nebraska, Lincoln Libraries, Archives, Special Collections - Robert E. Dewey Papers, 1946-1979 (National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections, 1982, MS82-1863).

Index Terms

Correspondents

Barr, Stringfellow, 1897-
Barzun, Jacques, 1907-
Bevans, Tom Torre
Bridges, Horace J., 1880-
Buchanan, Scott Milross, 1895-1968
Cerf, Bennett, 1898-1971
Chase, Stuart, 1888-
Copland, Aaron, 1900-
Fadiman, Clifton, 1904-
Gurian, Waldeman, 1902-1954
Howe, Quincy, 1900-
Lippmann, Walter, 1889-1971
Luce, Henry R., 1898-1967
Maritain, Jacques, 1882-1973
Nef, John Ulric, 1899-
Schuster, M. Lincoln (Max Lincoln), 1897-1970
Simon, Richard L. (Richard Leo), 1899-1960
Weidman, Jerome
White, E.B. (Elwyn Brook), 1899-

Subjects

Reading
Civilization--Philosophy
Education, humanistic
War
Peace

Document Types

First drafts

Series I. *How to Read a Book*, 1939-1940

Subseries A: Correspondence, 1939-1940

Publication, 1939-1940	Box 1 Folder 1
Prerelease promotion, 1940	Folder 2
Publicity and sales, 1940	Folder 3
Public reaction-reviews, 1940	Folder 4
Corrections and criticism, 1940	Folder 5
Public reaction, praise A-K, 1940	Folder 6
Public reaction, praise L-Z, 1940	Folder 7

Subseries B: Manuscripts, 1939-1940

Original bound manuscript	Box 2 Folder 1
Final bound manuscript	Folder 2

Series II. *How to Think about War and Peace*, 1943-1944

Subseries A: Correspondence, 1942-1944

General (War and Peace), 1943	Box 3 Folder 1
E. B. White, 1943-1944	Folder 2
Research, 1943	Folder 3
Preface, 1943	Folder 4
Publication, 1942-1943	Folder 5
Criticism, 1943	Folder 6

Subseries B: Manuscripts, 1943

Revised manuscript, printers copy, 1943

Chapters 1-13	Box 3 Folder 7
Chapters 14-23	Folder 8
Original manuscript, 1943	
Chapters 1-12	Box 3 Folder 9
Chapters 13-21	Folder 10

New Acquisition (2009-05-01-G)

Letter from Mortimer Adler to Gilbert Seldes, dated 19 April _____

Box 3
Folder
11

Index of Correspondents

- Abramson, Ben (Argus Book Shop, Inc.)--1.6
- Ackerman, R.W. (State College of Washington-Pullman)--1.4
- Adams, Charlie--1.6
- Adler, Mortimer Jerome, 1902- --1.1-1.7, 3.1-3.6
- Adler, Mrs. Ignatz (mother of Mortimer Adler)--1.6
- Alberg, Robert--1.5
- Andrews, Joan (Mrs. James)--1.6
- Armstrong, Walter P.--1.6
- Ayres, Ernest F. (Ayres Book Shop)--1.6
- Baker, Keith (Baker Paper Company)--1.6
- Baldwin, Howard (*The New Yorker*)--1.4
- Baldwin, James--1.5
- Ballard, Kenneth C.--1.6
- Balz, Albert G.A. (University of Virginia)--1.6
- Barden, John P.--1.6
- Barney, Chas. Neal--1.6
- Barr, Stringfellow ("Winkie"), 1897- (St. John's College)--3.6
- Barron, Mark--1.6
- Barzun, Jacques, 1907- (Columbia University)--1.4
- Bayer, Lee G. (Mrs.) ("Constant Reader")--1.4
- Beard, Ernest M.--1.6
- Beck, J.R. (McGill University)--1.5
- Bellperch, S.J.--1.6
- Berghof, Arthur--1.3
- Bern, Lillian--1.5
- Bevans, Tom Torre (Simon & Schuster)--1.1, 1.3
- Bischoff, A.--1.6
- Boddington, Gordon--1.4
- Bourne, Nina (Simon & Schuster)--1.3
- Bradish, Norman C.--1.6
- Bridges, Horace J., 1880- (Chicago Ethical Society)--1.6
- Brill, Mordecai L. (Rabbi, *Rodef Sholom* Congregation)--1.5
- Brockway, Wallace, 1905- (Simon & Schuster)--1.1
- Brody, L.B.--1.5
- Brown, Vincent A.--1.6
- Buchanan, Scott Milross, 1895-1968 (St. John's College)--3.6
- Burnham, Grace--1.5
- Camp, Leo (University of Washington, Seattle)--1.6
- Campbell, Sandy Montgomery--1.6
- Cerf, Bennett, 1898-1971 (Random House Inc.)--1.4
- Chase, Stuart, 1888- --1.1
- Clark, Blair (Harvard Student Council)--1.6
- Codigan, Charles. P.--1.6
- Coles, Robert M. (American Booksellers Association)--1.4
- Colker, David A. (The Logos Society)--1.6
- Converse, Henry F. (Mrs.)--1.6
- Copland, Aaron, 1900- [Adler to Copland]--1.1
- Courtois, Pierre--1.6
- Crane, Ronald Salmon, 1886- (University of Chicago)--1.6

- Dammann, Grace C. (Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart)--1.6
- Darnton, Paul H.--1.6
- Davis, Alison (Simon & Schuster)--1.1
- Davis, Frederick B. (American Council on Education)--1.6
- Dempsey, Edward J.--1.5
- Denniss, Lilian B.--1.6
- Deverall, Richard L[lawrence]-G[race] (Association of Catholic Trade Unionist)--1.6
- Dickmann, Edward A.--1.6
- Downes, John J.--1.6
- Dummer, Ethel Sturges--1.6
- Dumper, Robert S. (*Life Magazine*)--1.4
- Dunne, George H., 1905- --3.6
- Dyson, Edith Colter--1.6
- Echele, Cyril (National Youth Administration for Missouri)--1.6
- Eckenrode, J. William (The Newman Book Shop)--1.5
- English, Adrian (Dominican House of Studies)--1.6
- Fadiman, Clifton ("Kip"), 1904- (Simon & Schuster)--1.1-1.3, 3.3-3.5
- Field, Marshall, 1893-1956 (Marshall Field Stores)--1.6
- Follo, Charles L.--1.6
- Frank, R.W. (Presbyterian Theological Seminary)--1.6
- Franklin, Louise (J. Walter Thompson Company)--1.6
- Gabrielle, Iris--1.6
- Garson, "Bing" (Mrs. E.J.) [Helen Adler, recip.]--1.4
- Goddfellow, Lillian--1.6
- Godley, Paul F.--1.6
- Goldman, Melvin L.--1.6
- Goldwater, Walter--1.5
- Gray, B. (Mrs. John)--1.6
- Gray, Lillian (San Jose State College)--1.6
- Greenbaum, Richard W.--1.6
- Gries, Robert Hays (The May Company)--1.6
- Guenther, Louis C. (Howard College)--1.6
- Gurian, Waldeman, 1902-1954 (*The Review of Politics*)--3.6
- Hansen, Harry (*New York World Telegram*)--1.4
- Hayes, Royal E.S.--1.6
- Hazen, Ben H. (Benjamin Franklin Federal Savings and Loan Association)--1.5
- Head, Arthur (A. & W. Head Inc.)--1.5
- Heagney, Genevieve--1.6
- Hemenway, Courtenay (The Choate School)--1.6
- Henneman, William J. (Argus Book Shop, Inc.)--1.2
- Hess, Tom--1.6
- Hicks, K.--1.6
- Howe, Quincy ("Q.H."), 1900- (Simon & Schuster)--1.1, 1.3, 3.5
- Hudson, Mildred--1.6
- Humphrey, William V.--1.6
- Hurley, Francis J.--1.4, 1.6
- Hutchins, Alicia M.--1.6
- Jacobson, Hazel (Simon & Schuster)--3.5
- Jessup, John K. (*Fortune Magazine/Time-Life Inc.*)--3.1
- Keighton, Robert E. (Baptist Church of the Evangel)--1.6
- Kelly, Eugene (Coca-Cola Company of Canada)--1.6

- Kennedy, Walter B. (*Fordham Law Review*)--1.6
- Kephart, Quinter--1.6
- Kerr, Lucille--1.5
- Kilzer, Ernest (St. John's University-Minnesota)--1.6
- Komora, J.C. (The American Press)--1.4
- Koopman, Margaret O.--1.6
- Kramoris, Ivan J. (Marquette University)--1.6
- Kroch, A. (Kroch's Bookstore, Inc.)--1.2
- Kuhlman, A.F. (Association of College and Reference Librarians)--1.4, 1.6
- Lane, Elias N.--1.7
- Laskey, Harold H.--1.7
- Lawson, Josephine D.--1.7
- Leaf, Samuel--1.7
- Lee, Amy Freeman--1.5
- Lee, William J.--1.5
- Leventhal, Albert--1.3
- Levitan, R. (Mrs. A.)--1.7
- Lewis, Eugene R.--1.7
- Lewis, Leon--3.1
- Lippmann, Walter, 1889-1971 (*New York Herald Tribune*)--1.2
- Low, Dorothy--1.7
- Luce, Henry R., 1898-1967 (Time-Life Inc.)--3.1
- Madeleva, M. (Mary Madeleva), Sister, 1887-1964--1.7
- Magnin, Edgar Fogel, 1890- --1.7
- Maier, Ruth R.--1.7
- Malone, John J.--1.7
- Maritain, Jacques, 1882-1973 --1.7
- Martin, Everett Dean (Drexel Institute of Technology)--1.7
- Martin, James H.--1.7
- Mason, Walter M. (The Macmillan Company)--1.5
- Maven, Alex--1.5
- Maxwell, John J.--1.7
- McCarthy, William R.--1.5
- McCullough, Dan H.--1.7
- McNeill, Harry--1.7
- Means, Bill (Fordham University)--1.7
- Meyer, Katherine (The Washington Post)--1.4
- Michael, Jerome, 1890-1953 (Columbia University)--1.7
- Miller, Walter (Manheim & Company)--1.7
- Moley, Raymond--1.1, 1.2
- Morin, Wilfred Laurier--1.7
- Murphy, H.H.--1.5
- Myers, I.L.--1.7
- Nef, John Ulric, 1899- --3.6
- Orchard, Norris--1.5
- Palm, Glory (Zellerbach Paper Company)--1.7
- Patterson, Charles W.--1.7
- Patterson, Samuel W. (Hunter College)--1.7
- Penman, Anne Lanier--1.7
- Pierce, Virginia C.--1.7
- Price, Miriam Sutro--1.7

- Radd, Nora K. (Mrs. R.S.)--1.7
- Randell, David (Scribner's Book Store)--1.3
- Reilly, Mary Louise--1.7
- Reinhardt, Kurt Frank, 1896- (Stanford University)--1.7
- Riddle, Glenn K.--1.5
- Robinson, Henry Morton (*Reader's Digest*)--1.2, 1.7
- Ruml, Beardsley (R.H. Macy & Co.)--1.7
- Ruml, Treadwell--1.7
- Rummell, Frances V. (Ann L. Crockett)--1.4
- Rusk, William Sener, 1892- (Wells College)--1.7
- Sandwell, Stephen--1.7
- Schaefer, Samuel--1.7
- Schuster, M. Lincoln (Max Lincoln), 1897-1970 (Simon & Schuster)--1.1-1.3, 3.5
- Schwander, P.W.--1.5
- Schwary, Bernice J. Cohn (Mrs. Sydney)--1.7
- Seitlin, Charlotte (Simon & Schuster)--1.2-1.3
- Seubert, Eugene E.--1.7
- Shackford, John B. (South Dakota State College)--1.7
- Shimfin, Leon, 1907- (Simon & Schuster)--1.3, 3.5
- Simon, Richard L. (Richard Leo), 1899-1960 (Simon & Schuster)--3.5, 3.6
- Slesinger, Donald (American Film Center)--1.7
- Smith, Gerard--1.7
- Snyder, Evelyn--1.7
- Solomon, Gertude--1.7
- Sterling, Phyllis--1.7
- Sullivan, William C.--1.7
- Summer-Price, Aaron--1.5
- Thalker, George T.--1.7
- Tracht, Fred H. (University of Chicago Bookstore)--1.3
- Virginia Kirkus' Bookshop Service--1.2
- Ward, Mary Lispenard--1.7
- Ward, William. K.--1.7
- Weafer, Eugene Clyde--1.7
- Weidman, Jerome (Simon & Schuster)--1.2-1.3
- Weil, Richard Jr.(L. Bamberger & Co.)--1.2, 1.7
- Welch, Eleanor (*Time The Weekly News Magazine*)--1.4
- Wells, Mildred Ralston--1.7
- Werner, H.O.--1.7
- Whallon, Arthur J.--1.7
- White, E. B. (Elwyn Brook), 1899- --3.2
- Williams, Miner C.--1.5
- Wolfe, Helen H.--1.7
- Wolfe, Joseph--1.7
- Wolff, Bertram (H. Wolff Book Manufacturing Co. Inc.)--1.4
- Wood, Edwin H. ("Larry")--1.7
- Woodlock, Thomas F.--1.7
- Worthington, Jane--1.7
- Zeisler, Ernest B.--1.7

Unidentified Correspondents

- [Adler?], Carolyn (sister to M. A.)--1.6
- "Albert" (Simon & Schuster)--1.3, 3.5
- "Jack" (Quebec)--1.6
- "Jerry" (University of Chicago)--3.6
- "Jim" (H. M. Manheim & Co.)--1.7
- "Marion"--1.7
- "Mark" [Mark Van Doren?]-1.7
- "Sonia K." (Kentucky)--1.7
- "Willie" [Will or Wilbur Munnecke?] (Marshall Field & Co.)--1.4

Bar Code List

- 1--059188000055176
- 2--059188000055187
- 3--059188000055198