

# Albert Boni:

## An Inventory of His Readex Microprint Corporation Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

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### Descriptive Summary

- Creator:** Boni, Albert, 1892-1981
- Title:** Albert Boni Readex Microprint Corporation Collection
- Dates:** 1932-1970 (bulk 1959-1969)
- Extent:** 4 document boxes, 1 bound volume (1.89 linear feet)
- Abstract:** The Albert Boni Readex Microprint Corporation Collection consists of correspondence, research reports, research notes, clippings, and manuscripts that document the Readex Microprint Corporation's development of Microprint technologies as well as Albert Boni's composition of bibliographies on photographic literature. The collection is arranged in three series: I. Readex Microprint Corporation Research, 1932-1970, undated; II. Index to the Literature of Photography, 1932-1950, undated; and III. *Photographic Literature*, undated.
- Call Number:** Manuscript Collection MS-0445
- 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](mailto:reference@hrc.utexas.edu)
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### Administrative Information

- Acquisition:** Purchase, 1976 (R7305)
- Processed by:** Elspeth Healey, 2010; updated by Kelsey Handler, 2012
- Repository:** [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin](#)
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## Biographical Sketch

Albert Boni was born on October 21, 1892, in New York City to Charles and Bertha (*née* Saslavsky) Boni. Raised in Newark, New Jersey, Boni attended first Cornell University and then Harvard University. In 1917, he married Nell van Leeuwen and had one son, William.

In 1913, Boni began a career in the book trade when he and his younger brother Charles founded the Washington Square Book Shop, located at 137 MacDougal Street in New York City, which soon became popular with writers from the Greenwich Village bohemian community. In 1915, the Boni brothers partnered with Harry Scherman to launch the Little Leather Library, which offered reprints of classics; however, other commitments soon required the Bonis to sell their share. In 1917, Albert Boni co-founded the publishing firm of Boni and Liveright, where he helped launch the Modern Library. Though Boni's name remained a part of the publishing house until 1928, he left the firm in 1918 after reputedly losing a coin toss for control of the business to his partner Horace Liveright. In 1923, Boni entered into another publishing venture with his brother Charles, purchasing the small house of Lieber and Lewis to found Albert and Charles Boni. The firm went on to publish titles by William Carlos Williams, Ford Madox Ford, Thornton Wilder, Marcel Proust, and socialist writers such as Upton Sinclair and Max Eastman. In the late 1930s, the firm moved away from publishing original works of literature in favor of reprints and nonfiction before going out of business in 1939.

Also in 1939, Albert Boni founded the Readex Microprint Corporation. Boni conceived of his idea for microprint in 1934 when his friend, writer and editor Manuel Komroff, showed him his experiments with enlarging photographic images. Boni was struck by the notion that if one were to reduce rather than enlarge images, publishers and libraries might be able to access large amounts of information, but at a great savings in materials, cost, and space. Throughout the 1940s, Boni worked to develop microprint, a micro-opaque process in which pages were photographed using 35mm microfilm and printed on cards using offset lithography. The end product was a 6" x 9" card containing ten rows of ten pages each. These cards, each of which carried 100 pages of text, could then be viewed with a microprint reader. During this period Boni also published his first bibliography of photographic literature, *A Guide to the Literature of Photography and Related Subjects* (1943), as a quarterly supplement (no. 18) to the *Photo-Lab Index*.

Significant early Readex Microprint series included the *British Sessional Papers*, the *United States Government Non-Depository Publications*, *Early American Imprints, 1639-1800*, and *The Collected Scientific & Technical Papers on Nuclear Science*. In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, Readex continued to develop its microprint techniques, licensing several advances developed by scientists at Philips Research Laboratories in Eindhoven, Netherlands.

Boni also continued his bibliographic work on photography, editing *Photographic Literature* (1962) and its supplement, *Photographic Literature, 1960-1970* (1972). Boni viewed his work with Readex Microprint and his bibliographic scholarship on photography as intimately connected, attributing his success in developing Microprint to his research on the literature of photography.

In 1974, William F. Boni succeeded his father as President of Readex Microprint Corporation. William sold Readex to Dan Jones of NewsBank in 1984, and in the late 1980s, Readex transitioned to producing works on microfiche. Today, Readex provides online digital resources as a division of NewsBank.

Albert Boni died July 31, 1981, at his home in Ormond Beach, Florida.

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## Sources:

"Albert Boni." *Contemporary Authors Online*. <http://www.galegroup.com> (accessed 5 July 2010).

Landesman, Kayla. "Readex Microprint, An Historic Perspective." *Government Publications Review*, Vol. 15 (1988): 463-469.

Mitgang, Herbert. "Albert Boni, Publisher, Dies; Founder of Boni & Liveright." *New York Times*, August 1, 1981. <http://www.newyorktimes.com> (accessed 5 July 2010).

Russell, Carmen R. and David Dzwonkoski. "Albert and Charles Boni." *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 46: American Literary Publishing Houses, 1900-1980: Trade and Paperback*. <http://www.galegroup.com> (accessed 5 July 2010).

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## Scope and Contents

The Albert Boni Readex Microprint Corporation Collection consists of correspondence, research reports, research notes, clippings, and manuscripts that document the Readex Microprint Corporation's development of Microprint technologies as well as Albert Boni's composition of bibliographies on photographic literature. The collection is arranged in three series: I. Readex Microprint Corporation Research, 1932-1970, undated; II. Index to the Literature of Photography, 1932-1950, undated; and III. *Photographic Literature*, undated.

Series I. Readex Microprint Corporation Research contains records and research materials that reflect the functioning of Readex Microprint Corporation from its founding, circa 1939, until 1970, with an emphasis on its development of Microprint technologies during the late 1950s and 1960s.

A large portion of materials within this series reflects Readex's negotiations and collaborations with scientists at Philips Research Laboratories in Eindhoven, Netherlands. With the assistance of Jan Boeke, a research consultant hired by Readex, Albert Boni and his associate P. A. van der Meulen entered into an agreement permitting Readex to license photographic film processes developed at Philips. The relationship with Philips is documented in correspondence, research reports, clippings, patent documents, and notes. Of note are reports and research notes concerning the P. D. [Physical Development] process. Invented by Philips scientists Hendrik Jonker and C. J. (Cornelis Johannes) Dippel, the P. D. process is an intermediate photosensitive process that falls between the "expensive silver halide emulsion process and the inexpensive diazotype sensitizing process."

Also included in Series I. are Photographic Film Patent and A. B. Film materials consisting of lab reports, samples, patent applications, and correspondence relating to Readex's own efforts to develop and patent its improvements to the photographic film process. Other materials in the series include advertising pamphlets by Readex and other film and book publishers, as well as bibliographies of and research notes on potential subject matter for Readex Microprint publications.

Series II. Index to the Literature of Photography contains correspondence, research notes, lists, and manuscript fragments for a work that Boni labeled 'Index to the Literature of Photography.' Boni's lists include subject headings from A to Z, but typescript drafts (some with handwritten corrections) are present only for entries under the letter A. Also present are unidentified carbon copy chapter bibliographies originally filed with one of the Index typescripts. Although Boni did not publish a work titled 'Index to the Literature of Photography,' much of this material corresponds with entries that appear in his various published works on photographic literature.

Series III consists of a published copy of the Albert Boni's *Photographic Literature; An International Bibliographic Guide to General and Specialized Literature on Photographic Processes, Techniques, Theory, Chemistry, Physics, Apparatus, Materials & Applications, Industry, History, Biography, Aesthetics* (1962) containing handwritten corrections and additions. These corrections do not appear in Boni's *Photographic Literature, 1960-1970* (1972), which was a supplemental volume covering the decade of the 1960s.

The collection is in good condition with the exception of composite work sheets that hold film and microprint samples. These are fragile and require special handling. The majority of the collection is in English, although some Dutch correspondence and documents are present.

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## Related Material

The Ransom Center's Book Collection contains numerous books published by Albert Boni's various publishing ventures. Boni correspondence is also present in the Center's Edward Nehls Collection. Several other institutions hold research materials for Albert Boni. The New York Public Library's Billy Rose Theatre Division holds an Albert Boni Collection and the University of California, Los Angeles's Charles E. Young Library holds two relevant collections: the Albert and Charles Boni, Inc. Records, circa 1916-1974 and the Albert Boni Collection of Material about Photography, circa 1840-1983.

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## **Index Terms**

### **Organizations**

Albert & Charles Boni  
North American Philips Co.  
Philips Natuurkundig Laboratorium  
Readex Microprint Corporation

### **Subjects**

Photography  
Publishers and publishing--United States

### **Document Types**

Microforms  
Patents  
Specifications

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**Series I. Readex Microprint Corporation Research, 1932-1970, undated**

## AB Film

Report, August 28, 1969, by Dr. Robert Wall Sapp, research notes, reports, test samples, 1969, undated **Container**  
1.1

'Work Sheets 6-20-69 to 8-27-69,' 1969 **Container** 1.2

Advertising flyers and pamphlets for educational films, book publisher's catalog, manuscript notes, 1939, 1954, undated **Container**  
1.3

Appointment calendar with insertions, 1937, 1939, undated **Container** 1.4

## Bibliographies

Bibliographies of National Poetries and notes, unbound address book, undated **Container**  
1.5

History of Science Bibliography, Harvard University, duplicated list, undated **Container**  
1.6

Book Withdrawals, 1969-1970, undated **Container** 1.7

Empty Envelopes, 1961, undated **Container** 1.8

## General Correspondence and Research

Correspondence, research notes, clippings, lab reports, microprint samples, pamphlets, circa 1943, 1961, undated **Container**  
1.9

Correspondence, clippings, pamphlets, microprint sample, 1956-1963 **Container**  
1.10

Correspondence, research notes, clippings, pamphlets, report to stockholders, circa 1966-1968 **Container**  
2.1

Notebook with insertions, undated **Container** 2.2

Notes, beginning '1) Minutes of Last Year's Meeting,' undated **Container**  
2.3

Notes, clippings, pamphlets, author lists, paper samples, undated **Container**  
2.4

'Jelling Letter of Agreement,' correspondence, employment agreement, 1966, 1968 **Container**  
2.5

John Brown, Publisher of the University of Oxford, blank memorandum agreement, 1970	<b>Container</b> 2.6
Philips Research Laboratories, Eindhoven, Netherlands	
'Boeke — Dippel,' correspondence, clippings, research notes, 1959	<b>Container</b> 2.7
Correspondence, patent licensing agreements, lab report, 1961-1967	<b>Container</b> 2.8
Correspondence, research notes, and reports regarding use of Celanese Cellulose 2 ½ Acetate Film and Readex visit to N. V. Philips' Laboratories in Eindhoven, Netherlands, 19-21 June, 1961, undated	<b>Container</b> 2.9
Film Sample, undated	<b>Container</b> 2.10
Jonker, H.	
Correspondence, 5 October 1961	<b>Container</b> 2.11
'Jonker-Dippel letter (12/18/63) and lecture,' correspondence, duplicated lecture typescript, 1963, undated	<b>Container</b> 2.12
'New P. D. Recording Systems,' S. P. S. E. Conference, 10-14 June, 1968	<b>Container</b> 2.13
S. P. S. E. Conference Talk on P. D. (Physical Development) Systems, 11 June 1968	<b>Container</b> 2.14
'Some Principles of the P. D. Process,' duplicated typescript, 1963	<b>Container</b> 2.15
Lab Reports No.2265 and No. 2600, translation of report No. 2600, correspondence, and research notes, August 1967, undated	<b>Container</b> 3.1
Patent application translations, correspondence, microprint samples, 25 June 1963, undated	<b>Container</b> 3.2
'Stabilized Physical Developments' patent and duplicated report regarding Readex visit to N. V. Philips' Laboratories in Eindhoven, Netherlands, 19-21 June, 1961, 1966	<b>Container</b> 3.3
'Translation Report No. 2265, Dr. J. A. Lely and Mr. R. J. de Bont,' undated	<b>Container</b> 3.4
'Translation of Philips' Nat. Lab. Report No. 2600' and correspondence regarding photochemical patents, 6 October 1959, undated	<b>Container</b> 3.5

## Photographic Film Patent

- 'A. B. & Van Appl., Lierg Patent — Dec. 15, 1942. Appl. March 7, 1938,'  
typescript drafts, research notes, and correspondence regarding 'Photographic  
Film' patent application, 1966 **Container**  
3.6
- General research notes, clippings, and correspondence, 1967 **Container**  
3.7
- 'Pat. Office Action rec'd Feb. 1, 1968,' correspondence, duplicated patent  
documents, circa 1968 **Container**  
3.8
- 'Sheet Microfilm, Advantages—Techniques—Costs,' by Dr. Irvin Stewart, with  
inserted research notes, typescripts, and clippings, 1939, 1941, undated **Container**  
3.9
- Silastic Stocks Report , incomplete duplicated typescript, undated **Container**  
3.10
- Supp, Lawrence J.
- Correspondence and test sample, 30 March 1968 **Container** 3.11
- Correspondence, employment agreement, research notes including laboratory  
worksheets, 1968 **Container**  
3.12



**Series II. Index to the Literature of Photography, 1932-1950, undated**

List of subject entries with terminology research notes, clippings, correspondence, 1932-1950, undated	<b>Container</b> 4.1
'Tentative List of Subject Entries and Cross References in the Index to the Literature of Photography,' with insertions removed from front cover, undated	<b>Container</b> 4.2
Typescript fragments, carbon copy with handwritten corrections, and unidentified carbon copy chapter bibliographies, undated	<b>Container</b> 4.3-5
Typescript fragment, 'corrected copy,' carbon copy with handwritten corrections, undated	<b>Container</b> 4.6
Typescript fragment, carbon copy with minor handwritten corrections, undated	<b>Container</b> 4.7

**Series III. *Photographic Literature*, undated**

*Photographic Literature* (1962), published version with handwritten corrections

**Container**  
5.1

## Index of Correspondents

Box and folder numbers are followed by parenthetical notations indicating the number of letters from that correspondent to Albert Boni / Readex Microprint Corporation. When third-party correspondence is present, the name of the addressed individual appears in the parentheses with the number of letters. Notations regarding the presence of Dutch letters and any accompanying English translations are enclosed in square brackets.

- American Antiquarian Society--1.10 (1)
- Boeke, Jan--1.10 (1), 2.7 (3 to Albert Boni, 3 to C. J. Dippel [in Dutch, 1 with English translation], 1 to P. W. Haaijman [in Dutch])
- Boni, Albert, 1892-1981--1.10 (1 to Henry J. Gartland, 1 to Frank B. Rogers), 2.1 (1 to Readex Microprint Corporation Stockholders), 2.5 (1 to Murray Jelling), 2.7 (1 to C. J. Dippel), 2.8 (1 to North American Philips Company), 2.9 (1 to P. W. Haaijman, 1 to H. Jonker), 4.1 (2 to Walter Clark)
- Brown, Travis, 1926- (U.S. Department of Commerce, Patent Office)--3.8 (1 to Davis, Hoxie, Faithfull, & Hapgood)
- Bruno, Rose--2.8 (1 to P. A. van der Meulen)
- Clark, Walter, 1899- (Eastman Kodak Company)--4.1 (3)
- Dippel, C. J. (Cornelis Johannes), 1902-1971(Philips Research Laboratories)--2.7 (2 to Jan Boeke [in Dutch, 1 with English translation], 3 to Albert Boni)
- Eisner, Jerome A. (Bernays & Eisner)--2.1 (1)
- Enoch, Kurt, 1894-1982 (The Times Mirror Company)--2.1 (1)
- Gartland, Henry J. (Veterans Administration)--1.10 (1)
- Haaijman, P. W. (Philips Research Laboratories)--2.7 (1 to Jan Boeke [in Dutch])
- Hefter, Laurence Roy, 1935- (Davis, Hoxie, Faithfull & Hapgood)--2.5 (1), 3.6 (1), 3.7 (1), 3.8 (1), 3.12 (1 to Albert Boni, 1 to Lawrence J. Supp)
- Jaretzki, Alfred Jr.--4.2 (1)
- Jelmorini, P. A.--3.5 (1)
- Jonker, H. (Hendrik) (Philips Research Laboratories)--2.9 (1 to Albert Boni, 1 to P. A. van der Meulen), 2.11(1), 2.12 (1 to P. A. van der Meulen), 3.1 (1 to P. A. van der Meulen [in Dutch with English translation])
- Klein, Hugo (Charles Bruning Company, Inc.)--1.4 (1)
- Komroff, Manuel, 1890-1974--1.7 (1)
- Korsh, Sidney--2.1 (1)
- Minor, Miriam--3.3 (1 to U. S. Patent Office)
- Pelton, R. G. (North American Philips Company, Inc.)--2.8 (1)
- Rogers, Frank B. (Frank Bradway), 1914-1987 (National Library of Medicine)--1.10 (1)
- Schmitt, Isabel (Secretary to C. E. Kenneth Mees, Eastman Kodak Company)--4.1 (1 to John A. Tennant)
- Sackers, D. J. (Philips Research Laboratories)--2.8 (1), 3.2 (1)
- Supp, Lawrence J. (Larry) (Readex Microprint Corporation)--3.11 (1), 3.12 (2)
- Tanselle, G. Thomas (George Thomas), 1934- (The University of Wisconsin)--1.7 (1)
- Tennant, John A. (Tennant and Ward Publishers)--1.9 (1), 4.1 (1 to C. E. Kenneth Mees)
- Washburn, M. E. (American Optical Company)--1.10 (1)
- Watkins, J. E. (North American Philips Company, Inc.)--2.8 (1)
- van der Meulen, P. A. (Readex Microprint Corporation)--1.10 (1), 3.7 (2 to Albert Boni, 1 to Laurence Roy Hefter)
- \_\_\_\_\_, Carl--1.4 (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (N. V. Philips Gloeilampenfabrieken)--2.8 (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (Philips Research Laboratories)--2.9 (1)

- \_\_\_\_\_--2.1 (1 in Dutch)

**Barcode List**

- 1--059188000054865
- 2--059188000054876
- 3--059188000054887
- 4--059188000054898
- 5--059188000054901