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Guide to the

New York Times Company records. Seymour Topping papers

1963-1993

MssCol 17801

Forms part of the New York Times Company records

Compiled by Philip Heslip, July 2013

Summary

Creator: New York Times Company

Title: New York Times Company records. Seymour Topping papers, 1963-1993

Size: 9.66 linear feet (23 boxes)

Source: Donated by New York Times Company, 2007.

Abstract: Journalist Seymour Topping was a longtime reporter and influential editor for *The New York Times*. The Seymour Topping papers contain many of Topping's office files, primarily from his time as deputy managing editor and managing editor of The Times between 1976 and 1986, with a small amount of records from the late 1960s and early 1970s. Files document the day-to-day operations of the News Department, as well as Topping's interactions with fellow editors of the various newspaper sections and staff in *The Times'* advertising and production departments.

Access: Apply to Manuscripts and Archives Division for access at http://www.nypl.org/mssref. Some materials are closed until 2018.

Copyright information: Copyright for documents created by New York Times Company principals and staff has been transferred to The New York Public Library.

Preferred citation: New York Times Company records. Seymour Topping papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Custodial history: This collection was originally re-housed and organized in 1990 by The Times archives staff.

Processing note: The order and folder titles, which The Times archives staff imposed on the collection, have been maintained.

Creator history

Seymour Topping (born 1921) was an influential foreign news reporter, editor, and newspaper administrator who spent much of his career at The New York Times.

Topping was born in New York City and graduated from the Missouri School of Journalism in 1943. During World War II, he served in the United States Army in the Pacific theater, and in 1946 began covering Southeast Asia for the International News Service. He joined the Associated Press in 1948, and over the next decade was stationed as a reporter in the French Indochina region, London, and Berlin. The Metropolitan Department of The New York Times (which covers regional New York City news) hired Topping in 1959, and the following year he became chief Times correspondent in Moscow. His next assignment, in 1963, was in Hong Kong as chief correspondent of Southeast Asia. Topping returned to New York in 1966 as The Times' foreign editor; in this role he managed all correspondents stationed abroad. He continued to rise through The Times editorial ranks, becoming assistant managing editor in 1969, deputy managing editor in 1976, and managing editor from 1977 to 1986. While having increasing influence over news coverage, editorial decisions, and the general operations of the News Department, Topping continued to travel around the world and contribute major stories based on his travels. In September 1985, Times Publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger assigned Topping to be a consultant to the editors and publishers of The Times' 32 regional newspapers. Starting in 1986, Topping focused exclusively on improving the journalistic quality of the regional papers and received the new title of director of editorial development.

Topping retired from The Times in 1993 and for the next ten years served as Administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes at Columbia University's School of Journalism. Topping was the president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors from 1992 to 1993, and chaired that group's Committee on International Communications.

Topping married journalist and documentary filmmaker Audrey Ronning in 1948 and together they had five children.

Source: "Seymour Topping: Former Foreign Correspondent, Foreign Editor, Managing Editor and Director of Regional Newspapers at The New York Times (Retired)." University of Missouri, accessed July 9, 2013: http://journalism.missouri.edu/alum/seymour-topping/

Scope and content note

The Seymour Topping papers are composed of Topping's office files, primarily from his time as deputy managing editor and managing editor of The New York Times between 1976 and 1986. The collection also contains some items from between 1968 and 1975 when Topping was Times foreign editor and assistant managing editor, as well as photographs of Topping and his family dated as early as 1963. The bulk of the collection documents the day-to-day operations of the News Department under Topping, as well as his interactions with fellow editors and staff members of the various newspaper sections (culture, education, family, financial, metropolitan news, sports, style, and others), desks, city bureaus, and with The Times' advertising and production departments.

Topping's contributions to the paper are numerous, as evidenced by the large amount of internal memoranda between Topping and his associates in the News Department present in this collection. Memoranda and notes reflect all manner of issues facing the News Department, especially the working relationship between the news and editorial departments, and concerning general editorial policies, news coverage and assignments, publication space issues, story schedules and deadlines, production schedules, and headline development. Also present are records that touch on Topping's involvement with the launching and development of The Times regional newspapers and various national editions.

The collection is divided into two series: I. People and II. Subjects. The People files consist of records pertaining to individuals, while the Subjects files contain items on specific topics, institutions, geographic locations, and many of the paper's departments, sections, and columns. Items germane to two or more

people or subjects are often cross-referenced in the finding aid; documents related to specific issues are generally located in subject files rather than the people folders of those involved.

Topping's correspondence and memoranda with the executive editor can be found in the New York Times Company Records. A.M. Rosenthal papers. Throughout his editorial tenure at The Times and as head of the news department, Topping worked closely with Rosenthal, who was managing editor from 1969 to 1976 and then executive editor from 1976 to 1986. Topping's memoranda with Rosenthal are not duplicated in the Topping papers. Records from Topping during his time as New York Times foreign correspondent and foreign news editor can be found in the New York Times Company records. Foreign Desk records (1959-1966).

Arrangement

The New York Times Company records. Seymour Topping papers are organized into the following series:

Series I: People, 1968-1990 Series II: Subjects, 1963-1993

Key terms

Subjects

American newspapers -- New York (State) -- New

York

Names

New York Times Company Topping, Seymour, 1921-

Special formats

Memorandums Photographs Occupations

Newspaper editors

Container list

Series I: People, 1968-1990 (2 boxes)

This series is made up of files that contain items to, from, or concerning various individuals. People include staff members and others affiliated with the New York Times, as well as prominent individuals. Files consist of correspondence and memoranda documenting staff assignments, personnel issues, and letters of recommendation from Topping. Files for prominent individuals contain memoranda discussing coverage of them in The Times or correspondence regarding scheduling meetings and interviews. The most extensive files are those for Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, which contain memoranda on news coverage, story ideas, formatting and layout, and editorial suggestions; and for Iphigene Sulzberger, which hold her suggestions for news stories and correspondence surrounding the publication of her 1981 memoir.

Files are arranged alphabetically by name. Entries without box and folder numbers cross-reference related material in other files. These files do not necessarily collect every letter, memorandum, or document related to the individual; subject files should also be consulted.

	•
b.1 f.1	Abramson, Edward, 1977-1980
b.1 f.2	Adams, Virginia, 1977-1980
b.1 f.3	Altschull, Herbert J., 1980
b.1 f.4	Beame, Alex, 1980
b.1 f.5	Bender, Marilyn, 1975
b.1 f.6	Bennett, Leslie, 1979-1980
b.1 f.7	Bighia, Lucy, 1983
	Bonner, Raymond (See: Cambodia)
b.1 f.8	Boorstein, Allen L., 1982
	Boylan, Elizabeth (See: Wade, Betsey)
b.1 f.9	Burns, Arthur F., 1975
	Butterfield, Fox (See: China)
b.1 f.10	Caldicott, Helen (Dr.), 1982
	Cameron, Dennis (See: Accuracy in Media, Inc.)
b.1 f.11	Carey, Hugh L. (Gov. and Mrs.), 1975-1981
b.1 f.12	Cater, Douglass, 1978-1979
b.1 f.13	Charles, Prince of Wales, 1978, 1981
	Cherne, Leo
	See: International Rescue Committee, Inc.
b.1 f.14	Crescenzi, Gene, 1981
b.1 f.15	Cuomo, Mario M. (Gov.), 1979
b.1 f.16	Daniel, E. Clifton, 1981 (See also: Century Association)
	Dith, Pran (See: Accuracy in Media, Inc.)
b.1 f.17	Douglas-Home, Alec (Sir), 1971 Report on an off-the-record conversation with Sir Alec Douglas-Home on foreign affairs
	Durdin, Tillman (See: China)
	Egan, Thomas (See: News Department)
b.1 f.18	Emmick, Frank, 1978

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b.1 f.19	English, Betty Lou, 1983
b.1 f.20	Freedman, Alix M., 1978, 1981
b.1 f.21	Freudenheim, Milton, 1978
b.1 f.22	Friendly, Henry (Judge), 1970
b.1 f.23	Goodman, Jack, 1978
b.1 f.24	Harris, Jean, 1980 Correspondence regarding the publication of photographs taken in the courtroom
b.1 f.25	Harris, Robert, 1978-1979
b.1 f.26	Henry, Diane, 1978-1980
b.1 f.27	Holtzman, Elizabeth, 1977-1978
b.1 f.28	Huntley, Chet, 1980-1981
	Irvine, Reed J. (See: Accuracy in Media, Inc.)
b.1 f.29	Janson, Donald, 1972-1976
	Jones, David R. (See: National News)
b.1 f.30	Kirkpatrick, Jeanne, 1981
b.1 f.31	Kleinfield, Sonny, 1979-1984 RESTRICTED until 2018. See also: Book Review
b.1 f.32	Langguth, Jack, 1975-1978
b.1 f.33	Lawrence, Stephen J., 1983-1984
b.1 f.34	Lazar, Paul, 1981
	Lee, John M. (See: Financial News)
b.1 f.35	Leebaw, Milton, 1978
b.1 f.36	Levine, Richard, 1980
b.1 f.37	Lewin, Tamar, 1981
	Lewis, Anthony (See: Huntley, Chet)
b.1 f.38	Lippman, Harley, 1981
	Lubbell, John (See: Maps and Charts)
	Luce, Charles F. (See: Con Edison)
b.1 f.39	Macchiarola, Frank J., 1980
b.1 f.40	Marcos, Ferdinand E. (Pres.), 1982
b.1 f.41	Marriott, Michel R., 1984
b.1 f.42	McGovern, George (Sen.), 1972
b.1 f.43	Monnet, Jean, 1971
b.1 f.44	Nanji, Gulam Ahmed, 1972-1981
b.2 f.1	Neubecker, Robert, 1983
	Newhouse, Nancy (See: Family/Style Page and Section)
	Nossiter, Bernard (See: Kirkpatrick, Jeanne)

Series I: People, 1968-1990 (cont.) b.2 f.2 Pollack, Andrew, 1980 Reston, James B. (See: News Sources) b.2 f.3 Rhoden, William, 1981 b.2 f.4 Robbins, William, 1978-1981 Schanberg, Sydney (See: Accuracy in Media, Inc.) Schorr, Daniel (See: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)) b.2 f.5 Seidman, Eric, 1977 b.2 f.6 Senghor, Leopold Sedor (President of Senegal), 1985 Seymour, Whitney North, Jr. (See: Free Press and Fair Trial) b.2 f.7 Shapiro, Sally, 1975 b.2 f.8 Siebert, Muriel, 1980-1982 Silverstein, Louis J. (See: Art Department) b.2 f.9 Stanton, Frank, 1981 b.2 f.10 Steele, Arch, 1978 Sulzberger, Arthur Hays (See: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)) b.2 f.11 Sulzberger, Arthur Ochs, 1970-1983 b.2 f.12 Sulzberger, Arthur Ochs, Jr., 1974 Of interest: clippings of articles by Sulzberger in The Raleigh Times with Topping's comments and suggestions Sulzberger, Cyrus (See: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)) b.2 f.13 Sulzberger, Iphigene, 1977-1983 b.2 f.14 Taub, William L., 1976 b.2 f.15 Taylor, Stuart, 1980-1981 Thompson, Howard (See: TV Data) b.2 f.16 Topping, Leslie, 1990 b.2 f.17 Topping-Cone, Karen, 1981 b.2 f.18 Trudeau, Pierre (Prime Minister of Canada), 1981, 1984 Vinocur, John (See: France) b.2 f.19 Wade, Betsy, 1962-1983 Of interest: Wade's testimony before the Newspaper Guild of New York on using video display terminals (VDT) in the newsroom (1983). Pseudonym for Elizabeth Boylan b.2 f.20 Wellman, William, 1981 b.2 f.21 Wilson, Harold (British Prime Minister), 1968 b.2 f.22 Wright, Michael, 1982 b.2 f.23 Wright, Robert, 1970-1974

Series II: Subjects, 1963-1993 (21 boxes)

This series is made up of alphabetical subject files that are organized (and titled) by topical keywords, institution names, geographic location, and *Times* departments and newspaper sections. The bulk of these files contain memoranda distributed among Topping's senior colleagues, including Arthur Gelb, John Pomfret, Sydney Gruson, Allan M. Siegal, Louis J. Silverstein, Max Frankel, and sometimes Executive Editor A.M. Rosenthal and Publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger. Memoranda reveal all manner of news department operations, mostly regarding staff assignments, news coverage, developing news stories, editorial processes, introductions of new features and special sections, space and layout issues, and staff meeting and luncheon notes. Several files, particularly those pertaining to specific columns or sections, feature readers' mail and complaints. While Topping's focus was on national, foreign, and New York City news, financial news is also particularly well documented.

Of special note are the Enterprise Meetings files. The Enterprise Meetings were weekly meetings of editors designed to generate ideas, proposals, and coordination for special investigative projects. The meetings fostered story ideas across newspaper sections, irrespective of department lines. These files consist of follow-up reports on the Enterprise Meetings, memoranda on specific topics for stories, and rules and procedures for the projects. Also of interest are the National Edition memoranda regarding the planning, testing, and launching of the new edition in 1980.

b.2 f.24 Abscam, 1980 Of interest: memoranda about the definition of "scam". See also: News Sources b.2 f.25 Accuracy in Media, Inc., 1974-1984 Of interest: correspondence about an article by Dennis Cameron on events in Cambodia involving Sydney Schanberg and Dith Pran b.3 f.1-2 Advertising, 1977-1984 Correspondence between the news and advertising departments discussing terms of differentiation in appearance between news and advertising material. See also: Consumer Marketing Department; Front Page Advertising b.3 f.3 American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), 1977-1992 b.3 f.4 Arno Press, 1977-1980 b.3 f.5 "Around the Garden" (Column), 1980 (Memorandum concerning trademark law) b.3 f.6 Art Department, 1977-1985 Articles and Books about Topping (See: Biography) b.3 f.7 Articles and Books by Topping, 1980-1981 See also: American Society of Newspaper Editors; Missouri, University of Arts and Leisure Section (See: Culture News) b.3 f.8 Asia Society, 1978-1980 b.3 f.9 Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, 1976-1982 b.3 f.10 Associated Press, 1973-1982 Of interest: correspondence about rules for The Associated Press picking up exclusive stories from

Association of the Bar of the City of New York, 1976-1977

The Times

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Series II: Subjects, 1963-1993 (cont.) b.4 f.18 Century Association, 1982-1984 Mostly correspondence supporting applications for membership. Of interest: letter from Clifton Daniel regarding Century Association membership for women b.4 f.19 Chess Columns, 1981 b.5 f.1-2 China, 1970-1980 Of interest: memoranda regarding efforts to open a permanent bureau in Peking; memoranda about the adoption of new spellings of Chinese names; correspondence with members of the Chinese delegation at the United Nations Chinese People's Daily (See: China) b.5 f.3 Circulation (of The New York Times), 1973 b.5 f.4 City Athletic Club, 1977 City Edition (See: New York Times Editions) Coalition of Concerned Black Americans See: Editorial Policy: Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Issues Code of Ethics (See: Computers) Color Printing (See: Financial News) b.5 f.5 Columbia University, 1976-1982 (See also: China) b.5 f.6 Communications Industry, 1981-1982 Memoranda regarding news coverage of the field of communications, including television, radio, and print publications Company Briefs (See: Financial News) b.5 f.7 Computer Science News, 1983-1984 b.5 f.8 Computers, 1982 Memoranda regarding computer confidentiality policies in the office and a code of ethics b.5 f.9 Con Edison, 1978 Connecticut Weekly (See: Regional Editions) b.5 f.10 Conrail, 1980 b.5 f.11 Consumer Marketing Department, 1977-1979 b.5 f.12 Continental Oil Company, 1974-1977 Critics and Criticism (See: Culture News) Cuba (See: Emmick, Frank) b.5 f.13-14 Cultural News, 1975-1984 Of interest: memoranda regarding combining the Arts and Leisure department with the Culture department b.5 f.15 "Day by Day" (Column), 1982-1983 b.5 f.16 Deadlines, 1980 b.5 f.17 Death Notices, 1980 Defense Department (See: Freedom of the Press) b.5 f.18 Dominican Republic, 1981

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Drug Addiction and Narcotics, 1972-1973

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	Fine, Travis & Associates, Inc. (See: New York Daily News)
b.11 f.5-6	Food News, 1974-1976 Of interest: Memoranda regarding a series of articles on the global food situation
b.11 f.7-9	Foreign News, 1977-1985 See also: Financial News; SALT Agreement. Many of Topping's memoranda on this subject are in the New York Times Company Records. A.M. Rosenthal papers under the same file name
b.12 f.1-6	Foreign News, 1970-1971, 1977-1985
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b.12 f.8	France, 1984 Memorandum related to John Vinocur's articles on socialism in France
b.12 f.9	Free Press and Fair Trial Guidelines, 1971-1980
	Freedom House See: International Rescue Committee, Inc.
b.13 f.1	Freedom of Information Center, 1975-1980
b.13 f.2	Freedom of the Press, 1983-1984 Includes a speech by Topping at the Judicial Conference of the United States (1983); a statement from <i>The Times</i> before a Pentagon News Panel concerned with drafting war coverage guidelines (1984); letter from Bill Kovach to the Defense Department protesting the decision to exclude newspaper reporters from the War Press Pool (1984)
b.13 f.3	Front Page Advertising, 1979-1982
	Graphics See: Maps and Charts; Newsroom Technology
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b.13 f.5	Holiday Papers, 1981-1984
	Hsinhua News Agency (Xinhua News Agency) (See: China)
b.13 f.6	Ideas and Suggestions, 1977 Proposal for a weekly story suggestion system incorporating the best ideas of correspondents in domestic and foreign bureaus
b.13 f.7	Institute of Current World Affairs, 1976
b.13 f.8	International Rescue Committee, Inc., 1976 Complaints about a news story on the CIA's relationship with Leo Cherne, chairman of the International Rescue Committee
	Investigative Reporting (See: Enterprise Meetings)
	Kraus-Thomson Organization, Ltd. (See: Bettman Archives)
b.13 f.9	Labor Party, 1979
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b.13 f.12	Living Section, 1980 (See also: Family/Style Page and Section)
b.13 f.13	Lotteries, 1971
b.13 f.14	Makeup Desk, 1976-1977

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b.17 f.3-8	News Department, 1970-1984 Files related to editors' conferences, the production of the paper, and staff issues
b.17 f.9-11	News Desk, 1977-1985 Primarily memoranda related to editorial policies and following standards
b.18 f.1-3	News Desk, 1977-1985
	News Leaks (See: News Sources)
b.18 f.4	News Sources, 1976-1985
	News Space (See: News Content)
b.18 f.5	Newspapers: National News Council, 1977-1983 This file concerns complaints before the council against <i>The Times</i>
b.18 f.6	Newsroom Technology, 1973-1984
b.18 f.7	Nicaragua, 1985
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	Pentagon Press Pool (See: Freedom of the Press)
b.18 f.13	Personal and Private Papers, 1976-1984
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	Photography (See: Harris, Jean)
b.19 f.1-4	Picture Desk, 1969-1985
b.19 f.5-6	Pictures of Seymour Topping, 1963-1977 Includes photographs of Topping with family members and others, including with poet Robert Frost
	Planning Meetings: Tarrytown, New York (See: News Department)
	Polling (See: Editorial Policy: Elections)
	Presidential Elections (See: Editorial Policy: Elections)
b.19 f.7	Presidential Inaugurations, 1977-1985
b.19 f.8	Production Department, 1976 (See also: News Department)
b.19 f.9	Puerto Rico, 1977
b.19 f.10-11	Pulitzer Prizes, 1969-1983 Includes lists of nominations for the annual prize; copies of individual citations for the paper and various <i>Times</i> employees; scattered letters from Pulitzer administration to Topping and internal <i>Times</i> memoranda concerning the award
b.20 f.1-10	Pulitzer Prizes, 1969-1983
	Radio and Television News See: Culture News: The Guide: Communications Industry

b.20 f.11 Radio and Television Program: About and by The Times, 1973-1974, 1982 Correspondence regarding the taping of NBC's "Tomorrow" show at The New York Times (1974); suggestion for a television news program featuring *Times* editors, correspondents, and reporters (1982)The Raleigh Times (See: Sulzberger, Arthur Ochs, Jr.) b.20 f.12 Real Estate News, 1969-1984 b.20 f.13 Real Estate Report, 1984 b.21 f.1 Regional Editions, 1976-1983 Includes memoranda regarding the launch, staffing, and production of regional weeklies, such as The Westchester Weekly and The Connecticut Weekly. See also: New Jersey Edition and Weekly; Westchester Weekly b.21 f.2 Review of the Week, 1976-1985 b.21 f.3 SALT Agreement (Strategic Arms Litigation Talks), 1979 b.21 f.4 Saturday Edition, 1974-1976, 1984 b.21 f.5 Science News, 1972-1985 b.21 f.6 Science Times, 1978-1979 b.21 f.7 Second Front Page (Metropolitan Section), 1973-1977 South Africa See: Editorial Policy: Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Issues Space Quotas (See: News Content) Space Shuttle (See: Astronautics) b.21 f.8 Speakers of The Times, 1983 Memorandum on a speakers bureau in Washington using The Times' name b.21 f.9-10 Special Sections, 1973-1984 Speeches by Topping See: American Society of Newspapers; Freedom of the Press; Youth Forums b.22 f.1 Sports News, 1974-1985 Of interest: memorandum by Joe Durso on the concept of the Sports Monday Section (1977) Staff: Travel (See: News Department) b.22 f.2 Stock Market Tables, 1977-1984 b.22 f.3 Style, 1971-1980 b.22 f.4 Sunday Edition, 1973-1985 "Tomorrow" Show See: Radio and Television Program: About and By The Times b.22 f.5 TV Data (Company), 1984 b.22 f.6 UNESCO, 1978-1983 b.22 f.7 Urban Coverage, 1974-1975 Memoranda on The Times' approach for coverage of urban problems in major American cities Vietnam (See: National Research Council) War Press Pool (See: Freedom of the Press)

b.22 f.8	Washington Bureau, 1976-1985 (See also: News Department)
b.23 f.1-2	Washington Bureau, 1976-1985
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	Washington Star (See: New York Times News Service)
b.23 f.4	Westchester Weekly, 1977 (See also: Regional Editions)
b.23 f.5	Women's Action Alliance, 1975
b.23 f.6	World Rehabilitation Fund, 1982
	Writer's Guide to The New York Times (See: Consumer Marketing Department)
b.23 f.7	Year-End Reviews, 1969, 1976-1982 Memoranda regarding the publication of the national and international year-end economic surveys
	"Your Taxes" (See: Financial News)
b.23 f.8	Youth Forums, 1968 Transcript of Topping's appearance on the Dorothy Gordon Youth Forum on NBC Radio
b.23 f.9	Youth Reports, 1970-1977 Memoranda concerning ways to make <i>The Times</i> more attractive to young readers and the possibility of creating a separate youth section