



The New York Public Library
New York Public Library Archives

Guide to the

Ralph A. Beals records

1946-1954

MssArc 4951

Compiled by Richard Hollinger; machine-readable finding aid created by Jim Moske.

Summary

Creator: New York Public Library. Central Administration. Director's Office

Title: Ralph A. Beals records

Date: 1946-1954

Abstract: Records from the office of Ralph A. Beals, Director of the New York Public Library from 1946-1954.

Physical Location: RG 6

Conditions Governing Access:

Access to the collection is restricted to qualified scholars and researchers through the Office of Special Collections, Room 316.

Conditions Governing Use: All rights reserved. Permission to quote must be obtained in writing from the New York Public Library

Preferred citation: Ralph A. Beals Records, The New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Compiled by Richard Hollinger; machine-readable finding aid created by Jim Moske.

Related Materials:

Creator History

Ralph Albert Beals, the director of the New York Public Library from 1946 to 1954, was born in Deming, New Mexico, on March 29, 1899. He completed an A.B. at the University of California in 1921 and received an M.A. from Harvard in 1925. On June 12, 1928, he married Alice B. Stone, with whom he had one daughter, Mary Druitt.

After graduating from Harvard, Beals initially pursued a career in education. From 1926 to 1933 he taught English at Harvard University and New York University. In 1933 he took a position as assistant director of the American Association for Adult Education. During his tenure there he edited the *Journal of Adult Education* and prepared for publication two books relating to adult education.

Beals began his library career in 1940, when he was hired as the assistant librarian at the Washington D.C. Public Library. Two years later he accepted a position as Professor of Library Science and Director of Libraries at the University of Chicago. He became Dean of the Library School there in 1945.

In 1946, Beals was recruited as director of The New York Public Library. During his years as director, he attempted to revitalize the library following several years of diminished funding resulting from World War II. For example, Beals immediately raised employee salaries, introduced merit raises, reorganized many of the administrative units of the library, and increased the library's acquisition budget. To help support these changes he sought increased financial support from corporations, and participated in a lobbying effort that resulted in state funding for local libraries.

Beals' tenure as director ended with his death on October 14, 1954, which followed an illness that kept him away from his office for several months. A number of the procedural and structural changes that were studied and considered during his directorship, such as the adoption of a library-wide job classification system, were implemented by his successor, Edward G. Freehafer.

Scope and Content Note

Records document Ralph A. Beals' term as director of the New York Public Library, from 1946 to 1954. They also include some files relating to the directorships of his predecessor, Franklin F. Hopper, and his successor, Edward G. Freehafer. The collection consists of appraisals, bulletins, correspondence, legal documents, memoranda, notes, reports, and telegrams mostly relating to library functions such as acquisitions, donor relations, fund raising, and reference services. The records provide detailed information about a number of projects with which Beals was directly involved, including the proposal for a regional research library, the creation of a new job classification system for The New York Public Library, and the efforts to obtain state funding for public libraries. There is also material that relates to Beals' membership on the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO and the Yale University Library Council.

There is additional material from the directorship of Ralph A. Beals in the Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, also held by NYPL Archives.

Arrangement: Two series: Subject Files, 1947-1954; Correspondence, 1946-1953

Key Terms

Occupations

Librarians

Subjects

Libraries -- New York (State) -- New York

Library finances

Public libraries -- New York (State) -- New York

Research libraries -- New York (State) -- New York

Names

New York Public Library. Central Administration. Director's Office

Beals, Ralph A. (Ralph Albert)

Freehafer, Edward Geier, 1909-1985

Hopper, F. F. (Franklin Ferguson)

Hopper, F. F. (Franklin Ferguson)

Container List

Series I. Subject Files 1947-1954 (2 boxes, 1 volume, 1 oversize folder)

Arranged alphabetically by subject. The records consist mostly of correspondence, internal memos, notes, and reports on subjects relating to the administration of the New York Public Library, such as Long Range Proposals, Overdue Procedures, and Public Services.

- b. 1 f. 1 Advertising 1950
- b. 1 f. 2 American Jewish League Against Communism 1949
- b. 1 f. 3 American Library Association--Union Serials Committee 1947-1950
- b. 1 f. 4 Board of Trustees--Report of the Director of the Research Libraries October 1951
- b. 1 f. 5 Budget 1952-1953
- b. 1 f. 6 Central Library Building Inscriptions 1952
- b. 1 f. 7 Circulation Department--Branch Library Sites 1951-1952
- b. 1 f. 8 Circulation Department--50th Anniversary 1950
- b. 1 f. 9 Circulation Department--Overdue Procedures 1952
- b. 1 f. 10 Circulation Department--Staffing 1954
- b. 1 f. 11 Circulation Department--Statistics 1954
- b. 1 f. 12 Employee Class Definitions and Titles, Proposals 1951
- b. 1 f. 13 Employment Policy 1949
- b. 1 f. 14 Finances 1951, 1953
- b. 1 f. 15 Foundation Proposal 1952
- b. 1 f. 16 Long Range Goals Committee 1950-1951
- b. 1 f. 17 NYPL and the Post-War World (by Morris Hadley) 1947
- b. 1 f. 18 One Hundredth Anniversary of the NYPL 1948
- Map Case 300-A-3 One Hundredth Anniversary of the NYPL 1948
- b. 1 f. 19 Organization Chart 1948-1949
- b. 1 f. 20 Public Services 1951-1952
- b. 1 f. 21 Reference Department--Preparation of Materials 1951
- b. 1 f. 22 Reference Department--Salary Adjustments 1950
- v. 1 Reference Department--Survey of Preparation Services 1951
- b. 2 f. 1-4 Regional Library Proposal 1950-1954
- b. 2 f. 5 Regional Library Proposal--A Midwest Library Cooperative Program 1950
- b. 2 f. 6 Regional Library Proposal--Northeastern Regional Research Library 1951
- b. 2 f. 7 Regional Library Proposal--White Committee 1950-1953
- b. 2 f. 8 Registration Fees 1952
- b. 2 f. 9 Rice Reception 1953
- b. 2 f. 10 Salary Structure 1951-1952
- b. 2 f. 11 Schiff Fund 1953
- b. 2 f. 12 State Aid 1949-1950
- b. 2 f. 13 Statistics of Library Use 1948
- b. 2 f. 14 World War II Memorial, Proposal 1947

Series II. Correspondence 1946-1953 (5 boxes)

Series consists mostly of correspondence with persons who were not employees of The New York Public Library. Most of the correspondence is with publishers, potential donors, and other librarians. The primary topics of these letters are employment, donation of books or materials to the NYPL, financial contributions to the NYPL, and press coverage of library activities. Much of the correspondence in these files was addressed to or answered by Paul Rice North, Chief of the Reference Department. There are also internal memos and other documents relating to this external correspondence. Incoming and outgoing letters are arranged in alphabetical order by subject or by the name of the correspondent. However, only the files between "tib" and "zy" are extent. In addition, there is one folder of unsorted complaint letters that criticize library policies and services.

- b. 3 f. 1 Tib-Tim
- b. 3 f. 2 Tin-Tre
- b. 3 f. 3 Tri-UI
- b. 3 f. 4 UNESCO 1946
- b. 3 f. 5 UNESCO 1947
- b. 3 f. 6-7 UNESCO 1948
- b. 3 f. 8 UNESCO 1949
- b. 4 f. 1 UNESCO 1950
- b. 4 f. 2 UNESCO 1951
- b. 4 f. 3 Uni-Up
- b. 4 f. 4 Val-Vin
- b. 4 f. 5 Vir-Warf
- b. 4 f. 6 Wari-Wass
- b. 4 f. 7 Wat-Weis
- b. 5 f. 1 Weit-Wess
- b. 5 f. 2 West-Whitn
- b. 5 f. 3 Whitr-Wilk
- b. 5 f. 4 Wilia-Will
- b. 5 f. 5 Wilm-Wils
- b. 5 f. 6 Win-Wy
- b. 6 f. 1 Yale University--Council
- b. 6 f. 2 Yale University--Library 1946-1948
- b. 6 f. 3 Yale University--Library 1949-1950
- b. 6 f. 4 Yale University--Press
- b. 6 f. 5 Ya-Yu
- b. 6 f. 6 Zab-Zam
- b. 6 f. 7 Zan-Zet
- b. 6 f. 8 Zic-Ziv
- b. 7 f. 1 Zl-Zy
- b. 7 f. 2 Complaints about the NYPL 1949-1951