



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Black Academy of Arts and Letters records

1968-1980

Sc Micro R-5916

Processed by Debra Carter.

Summary

Creator: Black Academy of Arts and Letters

Title: Black Academy of Arts and Letters records

Date: 1968-1980

Source: Record group was acquired in 1972, following the closing of the Academy's offices. One box of materials was the gift of Joe Nash, 1984. SCM77-1, SCM77-25 and SCM77-70, SCM84-36.

Abstract: Files of the Board of Directors containing correspondence, agendas, minutes, and records of three board committees; administrative records including materials on the founding of the Academy, nominations for awards, and records relating to daily operations; and annual meeting files which encompass planning and programming for annual meetings, 1970-1972.

Conditions Governing Access:

Researchers are restricted to microfilm copy.

Alternative Form Available: Collection available on microfilm; Micrographic Preservation Service; call number Sc Micro R-5916 (MN *ZZ-30662)

Preferred citation: Black Academy of Arts and Letters records, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Debra Carter; Machine-readable finding aid created by Apex Data Services; revised by Terry Catapano.

Separated Materials:

The following items were removed from:

Name of Collection/Papers Black Academy of Arts and Letters

*Accession Number*SCM77-1, SCM77-25, SCM77-70, SCM84-36

*Donor:*Black Academy of Arts and Letters, Joe Nash

The item(s) listed below have been sent to the division indicated, either to be retained or disposed of there. Any items that should receive special disposition are clearly marked.

Schomburg Prints and Photograph Division:

One box of photographs

Creator History

The Black Academy of Arts and Letters was established to “define, preserve, promote, cultivate, foster and develop the arts and letters of black people,” as stated by Dr. C. Eric Lincoln in his founding address. Notable contributions by blacks to black America were to be recognized by the Academy members who, themselves, represented some of the finest achievements in arts and letters.

The Black Academy was founded March 29, 1969 in Boston, and was incorporated on June 12 in the state of New York as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. The Twentieth Century Fund financed initial operating expenses, providing \$50,000 in each of the first three years. With this money Academy officials hired a staff and in March 1970 opened a temporary headquarters at 475 Riverside Drive.

The founding committee was chaired by Dr. C. Eric Lincoln and initial membership was limited to fifty, with provisions to admit new fellows each year. The first board of directors consisted of Dr. Lincoln (President), John O. Killens (Vice President), Alvin F. Poussaint (Treasurer), Doris Saunders (Secretary), Dr. Charles V. Hamilton, Dr. Vincent Harding, Robert Hooks, Charles White and John A. Williams.

The first annual meeting of the Black Academy was held in September 1970. The meeting included workshops and an awards banquet. At the first awards banquet the Academy elected the late W.E.B. DuBois into the Hall of Fame. This resulted in the removal of longstanding visa restrictions by the State Department on Mrs. Shirley Graham DuBois to enable her to attend the ceremony. The painter, Henry Ossawa Tanner and historian, Carter G. Woodson were also enrolled. Other honorees that year included Lena Horne, C.L.R. James, Diana Sands, Amiri Baraka and Paul Robeson for longstanding contributions to arts and letters. Annual meetings were held in September 1971 and October 1972.

In addition, the Academy established an Annual Letters competition for black authors. Among the first recipients were Mari Evans for poetry, Franklin W. Knight for scholastic work, William Melvin Kelly for fiction and George Jackson for non-fiction.

The Black Academy of Arts and Letters received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Johnson Publishing Company in 1972 to conduct a conference in Chicago to assess the state of black art in the United States. The purpose of the conference was to establish a resource bank in preparation for compiling a directory of cultural activities in the black community.

In 1972 in an effort to economize, all staff positions at the Academy were eliminated and an office manager was hired to tend to the day-to-day operations of the Academy. The BAAL records indicate that the Board of Directors and committees functioned through 1973, although there were no further annual meetings. The official date of the dissolution of the Academy is not known.

Scope and Content Note

The records of the Black Academy of Arts and Letters (1968-1980) have been divided into three series; Board of Directors; Administrative Records, and Annual Meetings. Each series has been arranged chronologically.

Arrangement: Collection organized into three series: I Board of Directors; II Administrative Records; and III Annual Meetings

Key Terms

Subjects

African American arts
African Americans -- Awards
African Americans -- Social life and customs
African Americans -- Societies, etc
African Americans in the performing arts
American literature -- African American authors

Names

Black Academy of Arts and Letters

Container List

BOARD OF DIRECTORS FILES

The files of the BOARD OF DIRECTORS (1969-1973) contain related correspondence, agendas and minutes of meetings, as well as the records of the three board committees.

1969

- b. 1 f. 1 Black Academy of Arts and Letters - Incorporation Papers 1969-1970
- b. 1 f. 2 President - Speeches and Addresses 1969-1970
- b. 1 f. 3 Correspondence
- b. 1 f. 4 Agendas/Minutes of Meetings
- b. 1 f. 5 Credentials Committee

1970

- b. 1 f. 6 Correspondence Jan-April
- b. 1 f. 7 Correspondence May-December
- b. 1 f. 8 Memoranda
- b. 1 f. 9 Agendas/Minutes of Meetings
- b. 1 f. 10 Awards Committee
- b. 1 f. 11 Credentials Committee - Correspondence 1970-1971
- b. 1 f. 12 Credentials Committee - Candidates for Membership File

1971

- b. 2 f. 1 Correspondence
- b. 2 f. 2 Memoranda
- b. 2 f. 3 Agendas/Minutes of Meetings
- b. 2 f. 4 Awards Committee - Correspondence
- b. 2 f. 5 Credentials Committee January-May
- b. 2 f. 6 Credentials Committee June-December
- b. 2 f. 7 Credentials Committee - Nominees for New Fellows
- b. 2 f. 8 Credentials Committee - Special Election
President Leopold Senghor
- b. 2 f. 9 Credentials Committee - Ballots for New Fellows
- b. 2 f. 10 Membership 1971

1972

- b. 2 f. 11 Correspondence January-April
- b. 2 f. 12 Correspondence May-December
- b. 2 f. 13 Memoranda
- b. 2 f. 14 Agendas/Minutes of Meetings
- b. 3 f. 1 Credentials Committee
- b. 3 f. 2 Credentials Committee - Ballots for New Fellows
- b. 3 f. 3 Nominations Committee
- b. 3 f. 4 Proposition re: Term of Office

1973

- b. 3 f. 5 Memoranda

BOARD OF DIRECTORS FILES (cont.)
1973 (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 6 Membership - Biographical Sketches
- b. 3 f. 7 Membership - Biographical Sketches
- b. 3 f. 8 Membership - Biographical Sketches

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

The ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS (1968-1980) include materials on the founding of BAAL and those related to the day-to-day operation of the Academy. Daily correspondence, memoranda, financial papers and mailing lists are included.

1968

- b. 3 f. 9 Founding of Black Academy of Arts and Letters 1968-1969
- b. 3 f. 10 Founding of Black Academy of Arts and Letters - Proposal 1968-1969
- b. 3 f. 11 Correspondence - Founding of Black Academy of Arts and Letters 1968-1971
- b. 3 f. 12 Membership - Founding Members

1969

- b. 3 f. 13 Constitution
- b. 3 f. 14 Financial Records
- b. 4 f. 1 Correspondence 1969

1970

- b. 4 f. 2 Correspondence February-April
- b. 4 f. 3 Correspondence May-June
- b. 4 f. 4 Correspondence July
- b. 4 f. 5 Correspondence August-September
- b. 4 f. 6 Correspondence October
- b. 4 f. 7 Correspondence November
- b. 4 f. 8 Correspondence December
- b. 4 f. 9 Correspondence - DuBois, Shirley
- b. 4 f. 10 Memoranda
- b. 4 f. 11 Personnel Committee
- b. 4 f. 12 Personnel Records
- b. 5 f. 1 Personnel Records - Candidates for Director
- b. 5 f. 2 Financial Records
- b. 5 f. 3 Financial Records - Payroll
- b. 5 f. 4 Financial Records - Black Academy of Arts and Letters Contributors

1971

- b. 5 f. 5 Correspondence January-February
- b. 5 f. 6 Correspondence March-April
- b. 5 f. 7 Correspondence May-June
- b. 5 f. 8 Correspondence July-August
- b. 6 f. 1 Correspondence September
- b. 6 f. 2 Correspondence October
- b. 6 f. 3 Correspondence November-December
- b. 6 f. 4 Correspondence - Daily Mail Lists

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS (cont.)

1971 (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 5 Memoranda
- b. 6 f. 6 Personnel Committee
- b. 6 f. 7 Biographical Sketches
- b. 6 f. 8 Biographical Sketches
- b. 6 f. 9 Minutes/Reports
- b. 6 f. 10 Program Proposals
- b. 6 f. 11 W.E.B. DuBois Cocktail Party
- b. 7 f. 1 Book Committee - Nominations for Awards, (Works published in 1970) 1970
- b. 7 f. 2 Book Committee - Nominations for Awards 1971
- b. 7 f. 3 Book Committee - Nominations for Awards 1971
- b. 7 f. 4 Book Committee - Book Lists
- b. 7 f. 5 Book Committee - Selections for Awards in Letters (Works published in 1971)
- b. 8 f. 1 Book Committee - Evaluation Forms
- b. 8 f. 2 Writers, Questionnaires 1971 -
- b. 8 f. 3 Manual for Black Writers
- b. 8 f. 4 Artists' Committee
- b. 8 f. 5 Housing Committee 1969-1971, n.d.
- b. 8 f. 6 Schomburg Committee 1971
- b. 8 f. 7 John O. Killens, (Book Party) March 21
- b. 8 f. 8 John O. Killens and John A. Williams Reading Tour
- b. 8 f. 9 Fundraising
- b. 8 f. 10 Fundraising - Field Foundation
- b. 8 f. 11 Fundraising - Ford Foundation
- b. 8 f. 12 Fundraising - Norman Foundation
- b. 8 f. 13 Fundraising - Stern Family
- b. 8 f. 14 Second World Festival of Black Arts
- b. 9 f. 1 Financial Records 1970-1971
- b. 9 f. 2 Financial Records 1970-1971
- b. 9 f. 3 Financial Records 1971
- b. 9 f. 4 Newspaper Clippings 1969-1971
- 1972
- b. 9 f. 5 Correspondence 1972
- b. 9 f. 6 Insurance Coverage 1970-1972
- b. 9 f. 7 Staff Meetings
- b. 9 f. 8 Book Committee
- b. 9 f. 9 Book Committee - Evaluation Forms
- b. 10 f. 1 Langston Hughes' House
- b. 10 f. 2 *Premiere of Buck and the Preacher*
- b. 10 f. 3-4 National Conference To Assess The State of Black Arts and Letters May 26-28, 1972

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS (cont.)
1972 (cont.)

- b. 10 f. 5 National Conference To Assess The State of Black Arts and Letters - Transcript
- b. 10 f. 6 Financial Records
- b. 10 f. 7 Visitors' Register
- b. 10 f. 8 Press Releases 1969-1972
- b. 10 f. 9 Newsletters 1969-1972
- b. 10 f. 10 Correspondence 1973
- b. 10 f. 11 Letters 1974-1978
- b. 11 f. 1 Financial Records 1970-1973
- b. 11 f. 2 Financial Records 1973-1975, 1978
- b. 11 f. 3 Financial Records 1975-1977
- b. 11 f. 4 Financial Records 1977-1980
- b. 11 f. 5 Mailing Lists
- b. 11 f. 6 Mailing Lists
- b. 11 f. 7 Mailing Lists
- b. 11 f. 8 Mailing Lists
- b. 11 f. 9 Mailing Lists
- b. 11 f. 10 Mailing Lists

Annual Meeting

The ANNUAL MEETING materials (1970-1972) encompass the planning and programming of the 1970, 1971, and 1972 meetings. The meetings covered two to three days of activities. Including workshops, cocktail parties, auctions and awards banquets. These files include correspondence, programs, transcripts of meetings and financial records.

1970

- b. 12 f. 1 Correspondence
- b. 12 f. 2 Correspondence - Awards Banquet
- b. 12 f. 3 Program Committee
- b. 12 f. 4 Pre-Banquet Party - Twentieth Century Fund
- b. 12 f. 5 Awards Banquet - Program
- b. 12 f. 6 Attendance
- b. 12 f. 7 Reservations - Membership
- b. 12 f. 8 Awards Banquet - Reservations
- b. 12 f. 9 Awards Banquet - Paul Robeson
- b. 12 f. 10 Awards Banquet - Transcript
- b. 12 f. 11 Post Awards Banquet
- b. 13 f. 1 Transcript Of Awards Banquet
- b. 13 f. 2 Workshops
- b. 13 f. 3 Social Science Workshop
- b. 13 f. 4 History And Education Workshop
- b. 13 f. 5 Performing Arts Workshop
- b. 13 f. 6 Literature Workshop
- b. 13 f. 7 Fine Arts Workshop

Annual Meeting (cont.)

1970 (cont.)

- b. 13 f. 8 Film And Photography Workshop

1971

- b. 13 f. 9 Correspondence
- b. 13 f. 10 Program Committee 1970-1971
- b. 13 f. 11 Program
- b. 13 f. 12 Belafonte/Dee Party
- b. 13 f. 13 Belafonte/Dee Party (Post Party Letters)
- b. 13 f. 14 Reservations - Membership
- b. 13 f. 15 Awards Banquet - Reservations And Seating
- b. 13 f. 16 Awards Banquet - Invitations To Be Sent
- b. 13 f. 17 Awards Banquet - Financial Records
- b. 14 f. 1 Awards Banquet Pledges
- b. 14 f. 2 Reservations - Membership
- b. 14 f. 3 Correspondence - Post Awards Banquet
- b. 14 f. 4 Transcript September 18
- b. 14 f. 5 Transcript September 19
- b. 14 f. 6 Transcript, Awards Dinner
- b. 14 f. 7 Workshops
- b. 14 f. 8 Waldorf Astoria

1972

- b. 14 f. 9 Correspondence
- b. 14 f. 10 Benefit Cocktail Auction 1972, October 8
- b. 14 f. 11 Reservations
- b. 14 f. 12 Program