



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

Guide to the

Robert W. July collection

1958-1999

Sc MG 748

Summary

Creator: July, Robert William

Title: Robert W. July collection

Date: 1958-1999

Size: 2.0 linear feet (2 boxes)

Source: Gift of the Robert W. July estate, December 2004.

Abstract: Robert W. July was a Rockefeller Foundation Assistant Director for the Humanities and an historian, and he spent the decade between 1955 and 1965 scouting for new talent in West and Southern Africa. This collection provides the perspective of an executive of a major foundation who encountered many of the leading cultural and intellectual figures in Africa, Black and white, on the eve of independence in the French-speaking and British Commonwealth territories.

Preferred citation: [Item], Robert W. July collection, Sc MG 748, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Accessioned by Andre Elizee, December 2004.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs and negatives

Creator History

Born in 1918, Robert W. July was a Rockefeller Foundation Assistant Director for the Humanities, and spent the decade between 1955 and 1965, scouting for new talent in West and Southern Africa. After a stint as visiting professor at the University College of Nairobi, Kenya, and the Ibadan Institute of African Studies, Nigeria, he switched to a new career as an historian. His work received critical praise from various African and African-American historians. July died in 2004.

Scope and Content Note

The collection provides the perspective of an executive of a major foundation who encountered many of the leading cultural and intellectual figures in Africa, Black and white, on the eve of independence in the French-speaking and British Commonwealth territories. The author's published books are represented by correspondence, reviews, and research material. Other writings include two unpublished novels, book reviews, conference papers, encyclopedia articles, and an essay article on the political philosophy of Wole Soyinka. Correspondents include the critic and editor of *Black Orpheus*, Ulli Beier; the Nigerian author and critic, Abiola Irele; the British Africanist, Dennis Austin; the Ghanaian folklorist, Kwabena Nketia; the British editor of *Nigeria Magazine*, Michael Crawford; the West African authors Colin Legum, Kenneth Dike, and Efua Sutherland; publishers; and agents. July's extensive research notes for the book *Origins of Modern African Thought* drew from local West African newspapers from the 1860s to the late 1920s, and from archival sources in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Ghana. Also included are microfilm copies of documents from French colonial archives on the Senegalese Blaise Diagne, and on David Boilat, a mulatto priest and literacy advocate in West Africa in the 1840s.

Arrangement: Arranged into 10 series: I. Biographical; II. African diaries; III. Books; IV. Other writings; V. Research notes; VI. Correspondence; VII. Conferences; VIII. Projects and awards; IX. Other authors; and X. Printed matter.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American college teachers
African American historians
Authors, Black

Names

Austin, Dennis
Beier, Ulli
Boilat, P.-D. (P.-David), 1814-1901
Crawford, Michael
Diagne, Blaise, 1872-1934
Dike, K. Onwuka (Kenneth Onwuka)
Irele, Abiola
July, Robert William
Legum, Colin
Nketia, J. H. Kwabena
Soyinka, Wole -- Criticism and interpretation.
Sutherland, Efua Theodora

Container List

Biographical

- b. 1 f. 1 Curriculum vitae
- b. 1 f. 2 Notes for memoirs

African diaries

- b. 1 f. 3 1958
- b. 1 f. 4 1959
- b. 1 f. 5 1960
- b. 1 f. 6-7 1961
- b. 1 f. 8 Interviews, University of Ibadan 1964-1965

Published books

Origins of Modern African Thought

- b. 1 f. 9 Correspondence 1965-1976
- b. 1 f. 10 Reviews
- b. 1 f. 11 *A History of the African People* 1970-1981
Includes correspondence and reviews.
- b. 1 f. 12 *Pre-Colonial Africa* 1975
Includes research material.

An African Voice

- b. 1 f. 13 University of California Press 1983-1984
- b. 1 f. 14 Correspondence 1984-1985
- b. 1 f. 15 NEH Fellowship 1985

Other works

- b. 1 f. 16-18 "The Olokun Head" (fiction)
Includes early, incomplete draft.
- b. 1 f. 19-20 "The Tourists" (a novel)
- b. 1 f. 21 Article on Wole Soyinka 1981
- b. 1 f. 22 "Old Wine in New Bottles: The Humanities and African Independence" 1983
- b. 1 f. 23 *Encyclopedia Americana* article 1989
- b. 1 f. 24 Articles and essays
- b. 1 f. 25 Review of article, "Urban Design and Architecture in Pre-Colonial Africa" by Richard Hull
- b. 1 f. 26 Book reviews
- b. 1 f. 27 Letters to the editor

b. 2 Research notes

Notes located in card file box inside of box 2.

Correspondence

- b. 2 f. 1 1968-1972
- b. 2 f. 2 1973-1978
- b. 2 f. 3 Miscellaneous

Conferences

- b. 2 f. 4 Conference on African universities 1962

Conferences (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 5 Bellagio conference proposal 1979
- b. 2 f. 6 "African Cultural and Intellectual Leaders..." 1980

Proposals, grants, and awards

- b. 2 f. 7 "A History of Independent Africa", Guggenheim proposal 1973-1979
- b. 2 f. 8 Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Award 1980
- b. 2 f. 9 Fulbright Scholarship, Kenyatta University 1990

b. 2 f. 10 Other authors

Includes Peter Benson's "Border Operators: *Black Orpheus* and the Genesis of Modern African Art and Literature".

Printed matter

- b. 2 f. 11 Mbari Writers' Conference
- b. 2 f. 12 Research material

b. 2 Other material

Includes 4 boxes of microfilm strips and an index of names by country (38 envelopes).