



The New York Public Library
New York Public Library Archives

Guide to the

Harry Miller Lydenberg records

1926-1970 [bulk 1926-1944]

MssArc 4946

Compiled by Laura O'Keefe; machine-readable finding aid created by Jim Moske.

Summary

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

Title: Harry Miller Lydenberg records

Date: 1926-1970 [bulk 1926-1944]

Abstract: Records of Harry Miller Lydenberg, Director of The New York Public Library from 1934-1941. Collection spans the years 1926-1970 (bulk 1926-1944), covering his term as Director and also his participation in numerous professional associations.

Access: Advance notice required.

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: Harry Miller Lydenberg 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 Laura O'Keefe; machine-readable finding aid created by Jim Moske.

Related Materials:

Lydenberg's personal papers are located in Rare Books and Manuscripts Division at the New York Public Library

Creator History

Harry Miller Lydenberg became the third director of The New York Public Library in 1934, after nearly

forty years of employment with The Library. Born in Dayton, Ohio, on Nov. 18, 1876, he graduated from Harvard in 1896, and began work as a cataloger in the Lenox Library. From 1896 to 1899, he headed the Lenox's Manuscripts Division, and from 1899 to 1908, served as administrative assistant to John Shaw Billings, helping to plan the Central Building for the newly-consolidated New York Public Library. He was the Library's chief reference librarian from 1908 to 1927, and in that capacity spent much of his time increasing and strengthening its various reference collections. In 1928, he became assistant director under Edwin H. Anderson, assuming the directorship after Anderson's retirement at the end of October 1934. As Director, Lydenberg continued his work in building up the reference collections, and began expanding the branch library system. He was also active in a number of professional organizations, most notably the American Library Association, the American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation, and the Social Science Research Council's Joint Committee on Materials for Research. After retiring from The New York Public Library in September 1941, Lydenberg organized and headed the Biblioteca Benjamin Franklin in Mexico City, a library of information on the United States jointly sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) and the Coordinator on Inter-American Affairs. In 1943, he became director of the ALA's Board on International Relations, and in 1946, participated in the Library of Congress's Purchasing Mission to Germany, procuring materials that had been unavailable during World War II for American research libraries. In November 1946, Lydenberg retired formally from library work. He moved first to Greensboro, North Carolina, and then to Westerville, Ohio in 1956. He died in Westerville on April 16, 1960. Lydenberg married Madeleine Day in 1912. The couple had two children, John (b. 1913) and Mary (b. 1915).

Scope and Content Note

The Harry Miller Lydenberg Records span the years 1926-1970, covering his seven-year term as library director and also his participation in numerous professional associations. The bulk of this material is from the years 1926-1944 and consists of correspondence, reports, minutes of meetings, informational pamphlets and brochures, and newspaper clippings. Subject files contain correspondence and other materials pertaining to the operation of The New York Public Library and Lydenberg's involvement in national and international library matters. Of particular interest are materials, 1938-1970, concerning the role of an American Library Association committee on which Lydenberg served in the search for Librarian of Congress in 1939. Many librarians opposed the ultimate choice, Archibald MacLeish. Additional materials pertaining to the career of Harry Miller Lydenberg can be found in the Edwin H. Anderson Records and the Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, both held by NYPL Archives; and in the Harry Miller Lydenberg Papers held by the NYPL Manuscripts Division.

Arrangement: The Records are arranged in the following series and subseries: Series I. Correspondence, 1934-1939: Subseries A. Congratulatory Correspondence, 1934-1935 and Subseries B. General Correspondence, 1934-1939; Series II. Subject Files, 1926-1970: Subseries A. New York Public Library, 1926-1941 and Subseries B. Professional Activities, 1929-1970 (bulk 1929-1944); Series III. William Haygood. Survey of the Patrons of The New York Public Library, 1937

Key Terms

Subjects

Branch libraries -- New York (State) -- New York
Libraries -- New York (State) -- New York
Public libraries -- Administration -- New York (State) -- New York
Research libraries -- New York (State) -- New York

Occupations

Librarians

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Minutes

Names

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

Lydenberg, Harry Miller, 1874-1960

American Library Association

Library of Congress

Container List

Series I. Correspondence 1934-1939 (2 boxes)

Letters congratulating Lydenberg on his appointment as director; and incoming and outgoing correspondence and internal memoranda to and from Lydenberg and other NYPL staff members, pertaining to acquisitions, cataloging procedures, exhibitions, and similar library-related matters. Only a small portion of Lydenberg's 1934-1941 director's correspondence has survived, chiefly alphabetical files from Th to Z. (Some additional correspondence from these years can be found in the Lydenberg, Hopper and Beals General Correspondence, 1934-1954, also held by NYPL Archives.) Of note in Series I are materials from the survey committee of a user study of Westchester County libraries, on which Lydenberg served (Box 2, folders 2-5); correspondence with the historian Mary Beard concerning the proposed World Center for Women's Archives and the possible placement of the Center with The New York Public Library (Box 2, folder 15); and letters to and from the Yale University Library staff about a variety of matters (Box 2, folders 20-22).

Subseries A. Congratulatory correspondence 1934-1935 (7 folders)

- b. 1 f. 1 A - D 1934
- b. 1 f. 2 E - H 1934
- b. 1 f. 3 J - M 1934
- b. 1 f. 4 N - S 1934
- b. 1 f. 5 T - Z 1934
- b. 1 f. 6 Clipping regarding Lydenberg's appointment as Director Oct. 20, 1934
- b. 1 f. 7 Congratulations on honorary degrees 1935

Subseries B. General correspondence 1934-1939 (1.5 boxes)

- b. 1 f. 8 Ames, Mrs. Winthrop
- b. 1 f. 8a Greene, Belle de Costa 1935
- b. 1 f. 8b Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League 1937-1938
- b. 1 f. 8c Rice, John L. 1938
- b. 1 f. 9 Thom-Ti
- b. 1 f. 10 To-Transc
- b. 1 f. 11 Transp-Tru
- b. 1 f. 12 Tu-Tw
- b. 1 f. 13 Uj-Union Dime
- b. 1 f. 13a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
- b. 1 f. 13b Union Theological-Universal
- b. 1 f. 13c Universal Pictures Co. 1930-1937
- b. 1 f. 14 University Books, Inc.
- b. 1 f. 15 University Microfilm
- b. 1 f. 16 Unt-Van
- b. 1 f. 17 Var-Vir
- b. 1 f. 18 Vis-Vr
- b. 1 f. 19 Wad-Wals
- b. 1 f. 20 Walt-Wat
- b. 1 f. 21 Wea-Weisb
- b. 1 f. 22 Weiss-Weld

Series I. Correspondence (cont.)

Subseries B. General correspondence (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 23 Well-Westb
- b. 2 f. 1-5 Westchester County Library Survey 1934-1938
- b. 2 f. 6 Westchester County Historical Society-Weyman
- b. 2 f. 7 Wha-Whi
- b. 2 f. 8 Wia-Wilk
- b. 2 f. 9 Will-Willia
- b. 2 f. 10 Willis-Wilm
- b. 2 f. 11 H.W. Wilson Co.
- b. 2 f. 12 Wilson-Wilt
- b. 2 f. 13 Win-Wint
- b. 2 f. 14 Wis-Woods
- b. 2 f. 15 Wool-Worl
- b. 2 f. 16 Wri-Yak
- b. 2 f. 17 Yale Club
- b. 2 f. 18 Yale University 1934-1939
- b. 2 f. 19 Yale University Law Library
- b. 2 f. 20-22 Yale University Library 1934-1939
- b. 2 f. 23 Yale University Press
- b. 2 f. 24 Yan-You
- b. 2 f. 25 Yugoslavia
- b. 2 f. 26 Za-Zu

Series II. Subject Files 1926-1970 (4 boxes, 1 volume)

This series is comprised of two subseries: A. New York Public Library; B. Professional Activities.

Subseries A. New York Public Library 1926-1941 (.5 box, 1 volume)

Files pertaining to such matters as library pensions, the 1935 annual report, and material on the efforts of Lydenberg and others to secure a complete file of specifications for German patents in exchange for those of the U.S.

- b. 3 f. 1-7 German Patents Project - correspondence 1926-1938
- b. 3 f. 8 New York City - Comptroller's Office 1934-1941
- b. 3 f. 9 New York Public Library - Finances: Receipts for cash received by Circulation Department and Reference Library 1934-1935
- b. 3 f. 10 New York Public Library - Reference Department - Call Slips and Room Registers 1934
- b. 3 f. 11 New York Public Library - Reference Department - Current Periodicals 1934-1937
- b. 3 f. 12 New York Public Library - Annual Report (draft) 1935
- b. 3 f. 13 New York Public Library - Pensions 1936
- b. 3 f. 14 New York Public Library - Thomas Hastings Bust (Central Building)
- v. 1 New York Public Library - 40th Anniversary 1935

Series II. Subject Files (cont.)

Subseries B. Professional Activities 1929-1970 (1929-1944 (3.5 boxes)

Correspondence, reports, minutes, brochures, galley proofs, and other items documenting Lydenberg's involvement in national and international library matters. Coverage is especially strong for the Social Science Research Council's Joint Committee on Materials for Research and for the Committee for the Study of Copyright, part of the American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation. Of particular interest are the material from an ALA committee on which Lydenberg served from 1937 to 1939, which submitted recommendations to President Franklin D. Roosevelt for a successor to Herbert Putnam as Librarian of Congress. Roosevelt's disregard for the committee's suggestions and his decision instead to appoint the poet Archibald MacLeish, formally announced in June 1939, was opposed by many ALA officers and members (Box 6, folders 1-13).

- b. 3 f. 15 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Dec. 1929-Feb. 1930
- b. 3 f. 16 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Mar.-Sept.
- b. 3 f. 17 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Report and minutes of meeting Sept. 1930
- b. 3 f. 18 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Oct.-Dec.
- b. 3 f. 19 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Jan.-June
- b. 3 f. 20 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Jan. 1 1931-June 1932
- b. 3 f. 21 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Report on reproduction of materials Nov. 1931
- b. 3 f. 22 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Jan.-Nov.
- b. 3 f. 23 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Materials from annual meeting Mar. 11-12 1932
- b. 3 f. 24 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Jan. 1933
- b. 3 f. 25 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Feb.-June
- b. 3 f. 26 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence June-Dec.
- b. 3 f. 27 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Jan.-Feb.
- b. 3 f. 28 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Mar.-May
- b. 3 f. 29 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Dictionary of American Biography Project Apr. 1933-May 1934
- b. 3 f. 30 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Memorandum on Categories of Materials for Research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities 1933
- b. 3 f. 31 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Memorandum on Categories of Materials for Research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities - Correspondence Dec. 1933-Jan. 1934
- b. 3 f. 32 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Memorandum on Categories of Materials for Research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities - Correspondence June-Aug.

Series II. Subject Files (cont.)
Subseries B. Professional Activities (cont.)

- b. 3 f. 33 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Memorandum on Categories of Materials for Research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities - Correspondence Sept.-Nov.
- b. 3 f. 34 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Memorandum on Categories of Materials for Research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities - Correspondence Dec. 1934-Feb. 1935
- b. 4 f. 1 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Draft of annual report Jan. 1935
- b. 4 f. 2 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Mar.-Oct.
- b. 4 f. 3 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Oct.-Dec.
- b. 4 f. 4 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Jan.-June
- b. 4 f. 5 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence July-Dec.
- b. 4 f. 6 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Proceedings of meeting Dec. 12-13, 1936
- b. 4 f. 7 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Feb.-Dec.
- b. 4 f. 8 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Jan.-Feb.
- b. 4 f. 9 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Proceedings of meeting Feb. 11-12 1938
- b. 4 f. 10 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Proceedings of meeting Mar.-June
- b. 4 f. 11 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Proceedings of meeting July-Dec.
- b. 4 f. 12 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Proceedings of meeting Jan.-Feb.
- b. 4 f. 13 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Proceedings of meeting Feb. 10-11, 1939
- b. 4 f. 14 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence - Correspondence Mar.-Dec.
- b. 4 f. 15 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Mar.-Dec.
- b. 4 f. 16 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Correspondence Feb.-May 1941, Sept.-Nov. 1943
- b. 4 f. 17 Social Science Research Council - Joint Committee on Materials for Research - Pamphlets 1936-1939, n.d.
- b. 4 f. 18 American Library Association - Committee on Planning the Future of Libraries - Correspondence Jan.-June
- b. 4 f. 19 American Library Association - Committee on Planning the Future of Libraries - orrespondence July-Dec.
- b. 4 f. 20 American Library Association - Committee on Planning the Future of Libraries - Report: A Library Plan for New York State 1934
- b. 4 f. 21 American Library Association - Committee on Planning the Future of Libraries - Various reports 1934-1935

Series II. Subject Files (cont.)
Subseries B. Professional Activities (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 22 American Library Association - Committee on Planning the Future of Libraries - Correspondence Jan.-Apr.
- b. 5 f. 1 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Memos, reports 1935-1937
- b. 5 f. 2 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Correspondence and minutes 1937
- b. 5 f. 3 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Correspondence and minutes Jan.-Nov.
- b. 5 f. 4 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Correspondence and minutes Dec. 1938
- b. 5 f. 5 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Correspondence Jan.-Feb.
- b. 5 f. 6 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Minutes, reports, etc. Jan.-Feb.
- b. 5 f. 7 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Correspondence Mar.-Apr.
- b. 5 f. 8 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Minutes, reports, etc. Mar.-Apr.
- b. 5 f. 9 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Correspondence May-June
- b. 5 f. 10 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Minutes, reports, etc. May 1939
- b. 5 f. 11 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Minutes, reports, etc. June 2-9, 1939
- b. 5 f. 12 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Minutes, reports, etc. June 12-14, 1939
- b. 5 f. 13 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Minutes, reports, etc. June 16-22, 1939
- b. 5 f. 14 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Minutes, reports, etc. June 24-30, 1939
- b. 5 f. 15 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Correspondence July-Dec.
- b. 5 f. 16 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Minutes, reports, etc. July-Oct.
- b. 5 f. 17 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Minutes, reports, etc. Nov. 1939
- b. 5 f. 18 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Minutes, reports, etc. Dec. 1939
- b. 5 f. 19 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Correspondence Jan.-Feb.
- b. 5 f. 20 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Correspondence Mar. 1940
- b. 5 f. 21 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Correspondence Apr.-May

Series II. Subject Files (cont.)
Subseries B. Professional Activities (cont.)

- b. 5 f. 22 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Notes from conference Apr. 13, 1940
- b. 5 f. 23 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Correspondence Aug. 1940-Sept. 1941
- b. 5 f. 24 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright - Various reports 1940-1941
- b. 5 f. 25 American National Committee on International Intellectual Cooperation - Committee for the Study of Copyright n.d.
- b. 6 f. 1 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence Oct. 1937-May 1938
- b. 6 f. 2 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence June 1938
- b. 6 f. 3 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence July-Aug.
- b. 6 f. 4 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence Sept. 1938
- b. 6 f. 5 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence Oct.-Dec.
- b. 6 f. 6 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence Jan.-Apr.
- b. 6 f. 7 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence May 1939
- b. 6 f. 8 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence June 1-15, 1939
- b. 6 f. 9 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence June 16-30, 1939
- b. 6 f. 10 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence July-Sept.
- b. 6 f. 11 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Clippings 1939, 1941
- b. 6 f. 12 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence 1938-1940
- b. 6 f. 13 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Correspondence and clippings Apr.-Aug.
- b. 6 f. 14 Librarian of Congress Search Committee - Research paper by Betty Schwartz on role on ALA in 1939 Librarian of Congress search 1970
- b. 6 f. 15 Festschrift honoring William Warner Bishop - Correspondence July 1939-June 1940
- b. 6 f. 16 Festschrift honoring William Warner Bishop - Correspondence July-Dec.
- b. 6 f. 17 Festschrift honoring William Warner Bishop - Correspondence Jan.-Mar.
- b. 6 f. 18 Festschrift honoring William Warner Bishop - Correspondence Apr.-May
- b. 6 f. 19 Festschrift honoring William Warner Bishop - Correspondence June-July
- b. 6 f. 20 Festschrift honoring William Warner Bishop - Correspondence Aug. 1941-Mar. 1944
- b. 6 f. 21 Festschrift honoring William Warner Bishop - Various items ca. 1940-1941
- b. 6 f. 22 U.S. State Department-Council of National Defense - Correspondence Nov. 4-Dec. 2, 1940
- b. 6 f. 23 U.S. State Department-Council of National Defense - Correspondence Dec. 3-31, 1940
- b. 6 f. 24 U.S. State Department-Council of National Defense - Correspondence Jan.-Sept.
- b. 6 f. 25 U.S. State Department-Council of National Defense - Printed matter Oct.-Nov.
- b. 6 f. 26 Other materials - Correspondence - Hughes, Rupert Jan.-Feb.
- b. 6 f. 27 Other materials - Correspondence - Butler, Nicholas Murray May-Oct.
- b. 6 f. 28 Other materials - Correspondence - Bishop, William Warner 1941-1946

Series III. William Haygood. Survey of the Patrons of the New York Public Library 1937 (1 volume)

Haygood, of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago, undertook a survey of users of both the Reference and Circulation Departments. After a preliminary survey in 1934, this report tabulated 19,595 questionnaires and created what was described as the largest sample of urban library patrons in the United States. The survey compiled data from both the Circulation Department (16,540 questionnaires) and the Reference Department (3,055 questionnaires). Its particular interest was the age, gender, education level and occupation of the users as well as amount of use of the Library, activities within The Library, use of the catalog, materials used, satisfaction levels, complaints, and suggestions for improvement. There are numerous tables which correlate these various data against one another. An unusual feature of the survey is the list of Most Widely Read books cited by The Library's users. It should be noted that this typescript has some missing tables. Among its findings were that the largest category of users in the Circulation Department were students (38%) while the largest category for the Reference Department were professionals (59%). For users of the Reference Department, it found the motivation to be broken down into the following three categories: Intellectual (48.7%), Vocational (38.7%) and Recreational (11.3%). It found that males comprised 70% of the users.

- v. 2 A Survey of the Patrons of The New York Public Library 1937
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