

**The New York Public Library
Humanities and Social Sciences Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

**Romana Javitz Papers
1923-1980**

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Summary

Main entry: Javitz, Romana.

Title: Romana Javitz Papers, 1923-1980

Size: .33 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Gift of Mildred Wright, February 2005.

Abstract: Correspondence, diaries and other personal papers of Romana Javitz, Curator of The New York Public Library Picture Collection from 1929-1968.

Preferred citation: Romana Javitz Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Related materials Picture Collection Records. New York Public Library Archives.

Biographical note

Romana Javitz was born in Russia in 1903. She immigrated with her parents, Elias and Malvine, to the United States in 1906. The family settled in New York City, where her mother worked as a hat milliner, and her father as an importer of fine and rare woods.

While studying painting at the Art Student's League, Javitz began working part-time at the New York Public Library. She worked first in the Children's Room (1919) and later in the Picture Collection (1924). During 1925-1926, Javitz traveled throughout Europe to study the organization and content of documentary pictorial collections. Upon her return to the United States, Javitz resumed work at the NYPL Picture Collection. In 1929 the first chief of this department, Ellen Perkins, retired, and Javitz was appointed her successor.

Javitz was very concerned with access to the collection, and she introduced important innovations in its arrangement and description. In 1931, she overcame the language barrier by instituting a policy requiring the public to record their requests for pictures by describing, or drawing, them on a call slip. In 1934, Javitz devised an improved system of subject access. During the 1930s-1940s, Javitz hired artists who identified, clipped and prepared new images for the collection, and streamlined circulation procedures. Also during Javitz's tenure several major acquisitions helped to build the Picture Collection into a world-class image resource.

Her achievements outside of the NYPL included her work on the Index of American Design, the first comprehensive documentation of American decorative arts. For this she was awarded in 1967 the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Graphic Arts. Javitz took her mandatory retirement from The New York Public Library in 1968. Until her death in 1980, she continued to contribute ideas to the staff of the Picture Collection.

Scope and content note

The Romana Javitz Papers document the personal life of the long-time Curator of The New York Public Library Picture Collection. The date span of the papers is 1923-1980. They include correspondence, diaries, drawings and documents relating to Javitz's parents. The bulk of the correspondence consists of outgoing letters. Many of these document Javitz's relationship with the physician Ernst Philip Boas (1891-1955). Diary entries chronicle her daily life, travels, and work at The New York Public Library.

Arrangement note

The Romana Javitz Papers are organized in the following series:

Series 1. Correspondence, 1920s-1960s

Series 2. Diaries, 1920s-1970s

Series 3. Miscellaneous, 1923-1980

Series descriptions and container list

Series 1. Correspondence, 1920s-1960s

Chronologically arranged, outgoing letters from Javitz to friends and family members. 1925-1926 letters to Javitz's parents report on her travels in Europe. There are many letters, 1930s-1950s, addressed to Ernst Philip Boas, with whom Javitz was romantically involved for many years.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	1920's
	2	1930's
	3	1940's
	4	1950's
	5	1960's
	6	Undated

Series 2. Diaries, 1920s-1970s

Chronologically arranged bound diaries and loose leaves. Entries chronicle her daily life, meetings with friends, travels, professional activities and health concerns.

7	1920's
8	1930's
9	1940's
10	1950's
11	1960's
12	1960's-1970's
13	Undated

Series 3. Miscellaneous, 1923-1980

Personal and legal documents of Romana Javitz and her parents, Elias and Malvine. Included are a passport, naturalization papers, professional certificates and a death certificate. Also included are miscellaneous writings and artworks made by Romana Javitz.

14	Personal Papers, 1931-1980
15	Miscellaneous Artworks and Writings, n.d.
16	Family Documents, 1923-1960