Summary

Creator: Dickstein, Morris

Title: Morris Dickstein papers, 1940-2012 (bulk 1962-2000)

Size: 18.69 linear feet (45 boxes); 10.61 MB (992 files)


Abstract: Morris Dickstein is a distinguished humanities professor, American cultural historian, and widely published author and critic. The Morris Dickstein papers contain correspondence with fellow academics and prominent literary figures, as well as drafts and research files for many of Dickstein's books, essays, reviews, and lectures.


Preferred citation: Morris Dickstein papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: The collection arrived with little original order. The correspondence was organized chronologically by year, and the professional files were arranged alphabetically by folder title. When possible, original folders were maintained.

The floppy disks that comprise the Electronic Records series were forensically imaged for preservation. The textual documents from these images were migrated to Microsoft's .docx format in order to create a full-text keyword searchable index. Additionally, named entity extraction algorithms were run on the migrated documents to identify personal, organizational, and location names contained within them.

Creator history
Morris Dickstein is a distinguished professor, culture historian, public intellectual, and widely published author and critic. His areas of scholarship and criticism include film; popular culture; American and British literature and poetry; 1930s and 1960s; Jewish cultural history; and the role of the critic in society.
Dickstein was born in 1940 in New York City to Abraham Dickstein and Anne Reitman. He received his undergraduate degree in 1961 from Columbia University, where he was the editor of the Columbia Daily Spectator. From 1963 to 1964, he worked as a research fellow at Clare College, Cambridge University, and he completed his Ph.D. under Harold Bloom at Yale University in 1967.

Dickstein has held academic appointments at Yale University, Columbia University, the University of Paris, and Queens College, and currently serves as Distinguished Professor of English and Theatre and senior fellow of the Center for the Humanities at the Graduate Center at the City University of New York. An active academic, Dickstein has organized numerous conferences and seminars, edited several collections of essays, and served as judge for academic and literary awards. He was the founding director for the Center for the Humanities, CUNY Graduate Center (1993-2000), and served on the Board of Directors and as vice president of Programs of The National Book Critics Circle (1983-1989).

Dickstein is the author of five books, including The Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties (1977), Double Agent: The Critic and Society (1992), and Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression (2009). He has also published hundreds of essays and reviews in academic journals, and in mainstream intellectual publications such as Bookforum, Commentary, Daily Beast, Dissent, Le Monde, The Nation, The New Republic, The New York Times Book Review, and the Partisan Review. He has received numerous honors, fellowships, grants, and awards, and has twice been nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

Dickstein married Lore Wilner in 1965. Together they have two children, Rachel and Jeremy.

**Scope and content note**

This collection documents Morris Dickstein's activities as an academic and author, comprising his intellectual output from throughout his career. The Alphabetical Files consist of drafts and notes for Dickstein's books, essays, reviews, and lectures, as well as letters from prominent literary figures responding to Dickstein's criticisms. These files also document his administrative duties, both at academic institutions and for conferences, seminars, publications, and awards. The Biographical Files are comprised of a small amount of documents and letters related to Dickstein's personal life. The Correspondence is primarily made up of letters from editors and fellow academics, and features wide-ranging intellectual exchanges and discussions surrounding their professional and personal lives. Electronic Records primarily encompass Dickstein's essay and review drafts, some not present in the alphabetical files, and outgoing professional letters.

**Arrangement**

The Morris Dickstein papers are organized into the following series:

- Series I: Alphabetical Files, 1962-2012
- Series II: Biographical Files, 1940-1999
- Series III: Correspondence, 1962-2011

**Key terms**

**Subjects**
- Authors, American -- 20th century
- Critics -- Books and reading -- United States
- Critics -- United States -- Correspondence
- Modernism (Literature) -- United States

**Places**
- New York (N.Y.) -- Intellectual life -- 20th century
Names
Acocella, Joan Ross
Aeschliman, Michael D.
Atlas, James
Bell, Daniel, 1919-2011
Berman, Marshall, 1940-
Berman, Paul, 1949-
Betsky, Seymour
Binni, Francesco
Boelhower, William Q.
Brown, Rita Mae
Bruccoli, Matthew J., 1931-2008
Burnshaw, Stanley, 1906-2005
Dalsimer, Adele
Denby, David, 1943-
Dickstein, Morris
Dupee, F. W. (Frederick Wilcox)
Gilman, Richard, 1923-2006
Ginsberg, Allen, 1926-1997
Gitlin, Todd
Glikes, Erwin A.
Goodheart, Eugene
Gornick, Vivian
Graff, Gerald
Grumbach, Doris
Hall, Donald, 1928-
Hart, Jeffrey Peter, 1930-
Hartman, Geoffrey H.
Hellman, Lillian, 1905-1984
Hitchcock, Peter
Isler, Alan, 1934-
Johnston, Kenneth R.
Kaplan, Alice Yaeger
Kauffman, Stanley
Kazin, Alfred, 1915-1998
Kenny, Shirley Strum
Kermode, Frank, 1919-2010
Krupnick, Mark, 1939-
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Levitas, Mitchel
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Malcolm, Janet
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McGann, Jerome J.
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Milford, Nancy
Ozick, Cynthia
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Said, Edward W.
Schwarz, Roberto
Sleeper, Jim
Sperry, Stuart M.
Trilling, Diana
Trilling, Lionel, 1905-1975
Updike, John
Williams, C. K. (Charles Kenneth), 1936-
Woodring, Carl, 1919-2009
Zweig, Paul

Special formats
Editorials
Essays
Floppy disks
Literary criticism
Reviews (document genre)
Container list

Series I: Alphabetical Files, 1962-2012 (37.5 boxes)
This series documents Dickstein’s intellectual output throughout his career. The series is organized alphabetically by folder title, i.e. essay title, book review ordered by last name of the author, personal subject or correspondence file, or organization name. Occasionally, Dickstein, or his editors, assigned his essays multiple titles; when known, both titles are listed.

The files contain annotated drafts of books, essays, reviews, conference papers, and lectures, as well as Dickstein’s research notes and clippings. Files frequently contain letters relating to editing and publication issues, as well as letters from authors in response to his criticism or analysis of their work. Of note are letters from Russell Banks, Saul Bellow, Harold Bloom, Malcolm Bradbury, Allen Ginsberg, Lillian Hellman, Cynthia Ozick, Henry Roth, Edward Said, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Diane Trilling, Lionel Trilling, and John Updike, among others. Also notable is more sustained correspondence with fellow academics and literary editors, such as Michael Aeschliman, Daniel Bell, Stanley Burnshaw, Basic Books Inc. editor Erwin Gilkes, Jeffrey Peter Hart, Geoffrey H. Hartman, Ken Johnston, Herb Liebowitz of Parnassus: Poetry in Review, Jerome J. McGann, and Paul Zweig. These concern their intellectual pursuits as well as their professional and personal activities.

This series also contains material from Dickstein’s time at Columbia and Yale in the 1960s, including his dissertation proposal with comments by his advisor, Lionel Trilling.

Though there is some overlap, the Electronic Records series contains additional book, essay, and lecture drafts not found among these files.

b.8 f.11-12 “Aaron Copland and American Populism in the 1930s,” and Carnegie Hall Lecture, 2000-2004
b.8 f.14 Abish, Walter, undated
b.8 f.15 “About Face” (Beard Article), 1990-2008
b.8 f.16 “About Generations,” in the Columbia Spectator, 1980
b.9 f.1-2 Aeschliman, Michael, 1970-1990
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b.9 f.4 Agnon, S.Y., Review for Only Yesterday, 2000
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b.9 f.10 American Museum of the Moving Image Notes, undated
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b.9 f.13 Amichai, Yehuda, Conference, 1998
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b.10 f.5 Association of Literary Scholars and Critics, Notes and Essays, 2002-2007
b.10 f.6 Atlas, James, 1974-1988
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b.11 f.12 Berman, Paul, 1994-2002
b.11 f.13 Biggs, Christopher, Review of Arthur Miller, 2009
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b.12 f.3 “Bonnard at the Modern” (Art review), 1998
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b.12 f.6 Britannica Revisions for the Article on American Literature, 2002
b.12 f.8 Brown, Rita Mae, 1983
b.12 f.9 Broyard, Anatole, Review for Kafka was the Rage, 1993
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b.12 f.11 Bunzel, John H., Review of Political Passages, 1988
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b.13 f.1 Calisher, Hortense, Review of The Bobby-Soxer, 1986
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b.13 f.3 Cambridge History of American Literature, Modern Language Association Talk, 2006
b.13 f.4 “Can These Bones Live?: Biography and Cultural History”, 1999-2000
b.13 f.6 Cantor, Norman, Articles, 1989
b.13 f.7 Capote, Truman, Notes, undated
b.13 f.8 Carlyle, Thomas, Grant Request, 1970
b.13 f.9 Carver, Raymond, 1990-1991
b.13 f.10 Celine, Louis, Duke Conference, Essays and Survey, 1992
Contains responses to a survey concerning Celine from literary figures such as Saul Bellow, Jim Harrison, and Tom Wolfe
b.13 f.11 Center for Fiction "Future of Criticism Conference", 2010
b.13 f.13 “Chekhov and Gielgud,” “Gielgud’s Ivanov, or Chekhov Without Tears”, 1966
b.13 f.14 Chicago Humanities Festival, 2008
b.13 f.15 “Chicago: The Old and the New”, 1996
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b.14 f.1-12 City University of New York (CUNY), 1975-2010
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b.16 f.5 “Criticism and Culture,” Modern Language Association Panel, 1992
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| b.18 f.11 | Doctorow, Cory, Review and Interview, 1980-1983 |
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b.20 f.13 Fear Itself, Symposium, 2008-2009

b.20 f.14-18 Fellowships, 1968-2007

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b.22 f.2 Friedler, Leslie, Review of Fiedler on the Roof, 1991

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b.22 f.7 Fitzgerald, F. Scott, Lecture and Review, 1948-2010

b.22 f.8-9 Ford, Richard, 1992-1999 (Letters and review)

b.22 f.10 “Forward Forum: Jews and Money”, 1999

b.22 f.11 Frank, Joseph, Review of Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1976

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b.22 f.13 “From Ethnic Ripples, A Tidal Wave,” On 350 Years of American Jewish Literature, 2004

b.22 f.14 “From the Silence to Persona: Bergman’s Masterpiece”, 1988

b.23 f.1 "From the Thirties to the Sixties: New York World’s Fair”, 1989

b.23 f.2 Fruman, Norman, on Coleridge, undated

b.23 f.3 Fry, Paul, 1984

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b.23 f.6 García Márquez, Gabriel, Review of Autumn of the Patriarch, 1977

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b.24 f.18 Hall, Donald, 1982
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b.25 f.7 Helfond, Michael S., 1985-1987
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b.26 f.13  Insdorf, Annette, Review of Indelible Shadows, 1983
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b.27 f.7   Jewish American Writers, Essays, undated
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b.30 f.16 Levinson, Marjorie, 1996 (Unpublished exchange)
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