

accession file

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY  
RARE BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS DIVISION  
ACCESSION SHEET

Accession # 37 M 55

Location 12-m-4/6

Title Pynson Printers, Records.

13-N-1

Approximate inclusive dates 1927-1933.

Date of receipt Aug. 21, 1934

Received from Elmer Adler.

Volume on arrival 10 linear ft.

Number of boxes (after reboxing) 32 (10 linear ft. approx.).

Condition Good. Clippings should be removed.

Restrictions

Description

See attached.

Special Formats  Photographs  Maps  Audio Tapes  Films  Graphics  
 Artifacts  Machine-readable records  
 Other (list) \_\_\_\_\_

Temporary catalog card added entries

See attached.

Accessioned by Julie Miller.

Date August 11, 1987

## Pynson Printers

In 1922 Elmer Adler (1884-1962) left Rochester, where he had spent eighteen years in his family's clothing manufacturing business, and came to New York to found the Pynson Printers. There, working on a handset press, Adler came to be known for his exacting, artistic work, and his astronomical prices. The Pynson Printers worked on such publications as the New York Times (it also rented office space in the New York Times Annex on West 43d Street) and the American Mercury; turned out limited edition books for such publishers as Alfred A. Knopf and Random House; and produced advertisements, bookplates, stationery, and other printed work.

The publisher with which Adler's printing shop had the closest tie was Random House. When Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer bought the Modern Library from Horace Liveright in 1925, they hired Adler to redesign the books and the Modern Library catalog. When the Cerf-Klopfer partnership evolved, in 1927, into Random House - absorbing the Modern Library - they used the Pynson Printers for many of their limited edition books. In 1928 Adler was made a partner in Random House - although later he was bought out. Cerf was a stockholder in the Pynson Printers, and was involved with the planning of The Colophon.

In 1930, Pynson Printers began publishing The Colophon, a quarterly journal for book collectors containing articles on literary, bibliographical, printing, and collecting topics, and original prints. It was meant to be an example of fine printing itself, sometimes containing signatures by other presses as examples of their work. Adler, Burton Emmett, and John T. Winterich were the editors; contributing editors were: Frank Altschul, Thomas Beer, Peirce Butler, W.A. Dwiggin, John C. Eckel, Frederic W. Goudy, Ruth S. Granniss, Belle da Costa Greene, Dard Hunter, William M. Ivins Jr., Henry W. Kent, Rockwell Kent, Christopher Morley, A. Edward Newton, Vrest Orton, Bruce Rogers, C.P. Rollins, G.M. Troxell, Carolyn Wells (Houghton), and George Parker Winship. Contributors to the first issue included Sherwood Anderson, H.L. Mencken, James Branch Cabell, Robert Frost, and Willa Cather.

In 1940 Adler closed the Pynson Printers, and stopped publication of The Colophon so that he could go to Princeton University to serve in the graphic arts department, and to be a typography consultant to the Princeton University Press. He retired from Princeton in 1952, and moved to Puerto Rico to be a typography consultant to Puerto Rico's Economic Development Corporation. In 1958 he opened La Casa del Libro in San Juan. He died in Puerto Rico in 1962.

## Pynson Printers

The bulk of the collection consists of Elmer Adler's correspondence files, 1927-1932, kept while he was running the Pynson Printers, and organizing and editing The Colophon. A small amount of correspondence is addressed to Adler's co-editors, Burton Emmett and John T. Winterich. Included among the letters are: telegrams; postcards; memoranda; clippings; order forms for subscriptions to The Colophon, back issues, slipcases, and books; examples of printed work; bills and invoices; notes; sketches; samples of paper, buckram, and other materials; a few photographs of The Colophon, probably used in advertisements; announcements; press releases; invitations.

Included are discussions of all aspects - artistic, production, financial, legal, personnel, etc. - of running the Pynson Printers; matters relating to specific books printed by Pynson, many of which were published by Random House, and a number of which were illustrated by Rockwell Kent; Adler's activities as a consultant in typography; planning, organizing, and editing The Colophon - including criticism and advice from colleagues after the first issue appeared; Colophon subscription, editorial, and production matters.

Two major correspondents are Bennett Cerf, at Random House, and Francis Meynell, at the Nonesuch Press, London, a close colleague of Adler's. Other correspondents include: Frank Altschul, Charles Boni, Thomas Maitland Cleland, Warren Chappell, Franz Christophe, Norman Douglas, W.A. Dwiggin, Burton Emmett, Peter Franck, George S. Hellman, Dard Hunter, Rockwell and Frances Kent, Henry W. Kent, William A. Kittredge, Donald Klopfer, Mitchell Kennerley, Alfred A. Knopf, Frederic G. Melcher, H.L. Mencken, Charles Merrill, Stanley Morison, Vrest Orton, Harold Ross, William Edwin Rudge, D.B. Updike, Irita Van Doren, Frederic Warde, John Winterich, and other publishers, printers, authors, illustrators, editors. Also, subscribers, librarians, bookstores, subscription services, paper suppliers, typefounders, binders, book clubs, and others.

Two separate series of files are included: Colophon subscription correspondence, and order forms, 1930-1933, and letters, 1933, to the editors in response to an offer of a brochure about The Colophon.

Pynson Printers

Series

Correspondence, 1927-1932

Colophon subscription correspondence and forms, 1930-1933

Colophon brochure requests.

## Pynson Printers

### Arrangement Note.

The correspondence files are alphabetical largely by name, but readers should realize that Adler's choice of names for purposes of filing was idiosyncratic. In cases where people are writing as representatives of organizations, they are sometimes filed by their own names, and sometimes by the names of their organizations, thus splitting the correspondence into several files. For example: Irita Van Doren is filed under both V and N for New York Herald Tribune. Francis Meynell is generally filed under N for Nonesuch.

In some cases - Random House, for example - a whole folder will be dedicated to one correspondent. Generally, however, more letters to and from that correspondent can be found in other files.

Some correspondence is filed by subject, and subjects are frequently titles of books or articles on which Pynson or The Colophon were working.

Incoming and outgoing correspondence is interfiled; earlier correspondence is generally at the back of the file.

Pynson Printers

<u>Box</u>	<u>Correspondence, 1927-1932</u>
1	A
2 - 3	B
4	C
5	C - D
6	D - E
7	F
8	G
9	H
10	H - I - J
11	K
12	L
13 - 14	M
15	N - O
16	P - Q
17	Q - R
18	R
19 - 20	S
21	S - T
22	T - U - V
23	U - V - W
24	W - X - Y - Z

Colophon Subscription Correspondence and Forms, 1930-1933.

25	1930, A - M
26	1930, N - Z; 1931, A - D
27	1931, E - Z
28	1932-1933, A - G
29	1932-1933, H - Q
30	1932-1933, R - Z

Pynson Printers

Box

Colophon Brochure Requests, 1933

31

A - R

32

S - Z

Other Repositories With Papers Relating to Adler, Pynson, or Colophon.

Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

In Columbia's Random House collection, box 64 has files about Adler, box 173 has files about The Colophon, and box 175 has files about Pynson Printers. More correspondence of Adler's can be found in other collections at Columbia.

Grolier Club.

Letters, 1898-1958 - 1956-1958, bulk, primarily relate to Adler's Puerto Rican period.

Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of Rochester also have materials relating to Adler.