The New York Public Library Stephen A. Schwarzman Building Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

# New York Times Company records. Arthur Gelb papers

1949-1989 (bulk 1976-1989)

MssCol 17800

Forms part of the New York Times Company records

Compiled by Philip Heslip, August 2013

# **Summary**

**Creator:** New York Times Company

Title: New York Times Company records. Arthur Gelb papers, 1949-1989 (bulk 1976-1989)

Size: 5.46 linear feet (13 boxes)

Source: Donated by New York Times Company, 2007.

**Abstract:** Arthur Gelb (born 1924) was a prominent journalist and senior editor at The New York Times. The Arthur Gelb papers consist primarily of files from his time as The Times' assistant managing editor, deputy managing editor, and managing editor (1976-1989). These files feature internal memoranda between Gelb and newsroom staff, and document department assessments, story assignments, news coverage, editorial feedback, and the development of new sections and columns for the paper.

Access: Apply to Manuscripts and Archives Division for access at http://www.nypl.org/mssref.

**Copyright information:** Copyright for documents created by New York Times Company principals and staff has been transferred to The New York Public Library.

**Preferred citation:** New York Times Company records. Arthur Gelb papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

**Custodial history:** This collection was originally re-housed and organized in 1993 by The Times archives staff. Before processing, the collection was approximately 12 linear feet.

**Processing note:** The order and folder titles, which The Times archives staff imposed on the collection, have been maintained.

#### **Creator history**

Arthur Gelb was a prominent journalist and senior editor at The New York Times. Along with many other accomplishments at The Times, in the late 1970s Gelb led the development of the feature sections Weekend, Living, Home, Sports Monday, and Science Times.

Gelb was born in New York City in 1924 and graduated from New York University in 1946. He joined The Times as a copyboy at age 20 and became a reporter for the paper in 1947. As a reporter, Gelb covered diverse beats, such as health news, City Hall, and the United Nations. Having particular success as a theater reporter and critic, he was appointed chief cultural correspondent in 1962. Next, in 1967, he was placed in charge of New York City news coverage as metropolitan editor. Gelb was known as an energetic and imaginative reporter and a highly regarded editor at The Times. He was promoted to assistant managing editor in 1976, and the following year to deputy managing editor under Managing Editor Seymour Topping. In that role he was charged with the launch of the new daily feature sections, which expanded The Times to a four section paper. He contributed to the redesigns of the Book Review and Travel sections, and helped develop new columns and features, as well as an additional Sunday Magazine (internally called "Sunday Magazine II"). At the apex of his news career, Gelb served as managing editor from 1986 to 1989 under Executive Editor Max Frankel. He retired from the news room in 1990 and for the next ten years served as the president of The New York Times Foundation, the charitable wing of The New York Times Company that supports projects related to journalism, education, art. community service, environmental concerns, and social welfare. Starting in 2000, he worked as a consultant to the paper and fully retired in 2007.

Gelb is the author of several books including a biography of Eugene O'Neill (1974), which he wrote with his wife Barbara, and his memoir City Room (2003). He was also the editor of Great Lives of the Twentieth Century.

Source: Talese, Gay. "The Kingdom and the Tower," The New York Observer. June 26th 2007. Accessed July 30, 2013: http://observer.com/2007/06/the-kingdom-and-the-tower/

## Scope and content note

The Arthur Gelb papers consist of Gelb's office files from his tenure as New York Times assistant managing editor (1976-1977), deputy managing editor (1977-1986), and managing editor (1986-1989). These papers deal with all manner of news department issues, including staffing, reporter assignments, story development, editorial feedback on news coverage, content layout, and the creation and redesign of various columns and entire sections of the paper. The few items from before 1976 include photographs of Gelb in the 1960s, biographical write-ups of Gelb from as early as 1949, and a file on the operations and production of the New Jersey edition and weekly section.

The collection is divided into two series: I. People and II. Subjects. The People files consist of records pertaining to individuals, while the Subjects files contain items on specific topics, institutions, geographic locations, and many of the paper's departments, sections, and columns. Items germane to two or more people or subjects are often cross-referenced in the finding aid; documents related to specific issues are generally located in subject files rather than the people folders of those involved.

The strength of the collection is in newsroom discussions among Gelb and lower-level managers, such as James L. Greenfield, William H. Honan, John D. Pomfret, Allan M. Siegal, and Seymour Topping. These communications concern general reporting issues, as well as the operations of the various departments, such as Cultural News, Education News, Metropolitan News, National News, and the Washington Bureau. Gelb's contributions to launching new daily sections (Sports Monday, Science Times, Living, Home, and Weekend) in the late 1970s are particularly well documented, as well as his role in establishing and revamping columns, such as "Auctions," "Eating Well," and "Hers." Also present are discussions surrounding the Sunday Magazine Part II for special issues on Business, Home Entertaining, Electronics, and spotlights on New York City.

Most of Gelb's memoranda with executive editors Max Frankel, and A.M. Rosenthal, and with Publisher

Arthur Ochs Sulzberger are found in those individuals' New York Times Company collections. Researchers should consult the New York Times Company records. Metropolitan Desk records, for correspondence from Gelb's tenure as metropolitan editor from 1967 to 1976.

# Arrangement

The New York Times Company records. Arthur Gelb papers are organized into the following series:

Series I: People, 1976-1989 Series II: Subjects, 1949-1989

# **Key terms**

## **Subjects**

Journalists -- United States -- History -- 20th century

#### **Names**

Gelb, Arthur, 1924-New York Times Company

#### **Special formats**

Memoranda Photographs

# Occupations

Newspaper editors

## **Container list**

#### **Series I: People, 1976-1989** (1.5 boxes)

This series is made up of files that contain items to, from, or concerning various individuals. Most people represented are staff members and others affiliated with The New York Times. Files typically consist of correspondence and memoranda documenting personnel decisions, employee assessments, staff assignments, and feedback from readers on certain stories or writers. Many files also contain brief biographical statements for New York Times employees. Additionally, a few files concern prominent individuals and contain correspondence between them and Gelb.

The most substantial file is for Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, which primarily contains readers' mail answered by Gelb on behalf of Sulzberger, along with suggestions, criticism, and inquiries from the publisher about news articles. Also present are files for executive editors A.M. Rosenthal and Max Frankel that consist of notes from the senior editors reflecting random thoughts about various aspects of the news department. However, most of the collection's correspondence among Gelb, Frankel, Rosenthal, and Sulzberger is located in the appropriate Subject series files.

Files are arranged alphabetically by name. Entries without box and folder numbers cross-reference related material in other files. These files do not necessarily collect every letter, memorandum, or document related to the individual; subject files should also be consulted.

b.1 f.1	Andrews, Edmund L., 1988
b.1 f.2	Arnold, Martin, 1986
	Asahina, Robert (See: Hite, Shere)
b.1 f.3	Atlas, James, 1987
b.1 f.4	Bardach, Ann, 1979
	Brenner, Frank (See: Hart, Schaffner & Marx)
b.1 f.5	Burnham, David, 1982-1989
	Burros, Marian (See: Living Section)
b.1 f.6	Catledge, Abby Ray, 1984, 1989
b.1 f.7	Daniel, E. Clifton, 1980-1987
b.1 f.8	Dee, Richard A., 1988
	Dopkeen, Joyce (See: Freedom of the Press)
b.1 f.9	Farber, Steve, 1984
	Fiske, Edward B. (See: Education News)
b.1 f.10	Flatley, Guy, 1982
	Franco, Angel (See: Freedom of the Press)
b.1 f.11	Frankel, Max, 1986-1989
b.1 f.12	Frankel, Tobi (Mrs. Max Frankel), 1976
b.1 f.13	Fried, Eunice, 1981
b.1 f.14	Friendly, Jonathan, 1981-1987
b.1 f.15	Gleeson, Patricia, 1978
b.1 f.16	Glueck, Grace, 1977-1985
b.1 f.17	Golden, Soma, 1987
b.1 f.18	Gupte, Pranay, 1985

# Series I: People, 1976-1989 (cont.)

Gurney, A.R. (See: Home Entertaining) b.1 f.19 Gwertzman, Bernard, 1989 Hall, Trish (See: Living Section) b.1 f.20 Heiskell, Andrew (Mrs.) (Marian Sulzberger Heiskell), 1985-1989 b.1 f.21 Hildes, Heim Norman, 1981 b.1 f.22 Hite, Shere, 1981 Honan, William H. (See: Cultureal News) Jackson, Jesse (See: Associated Press) b.1 f.23 Knopf, Alfred, Jr., 1979-1984 b.1 f.24 Koch, Edward I. (Mayor), 1978-1988 Of interest: memorandum on an off-the-record interview with Koch about the 1989 New York City mayoral election (1988) Maclaren, Colin S. (See: Newspapers: New York City) b.1 f.25 Markel, Lester, 1976 b.1 f.26 Miller, Bryan, 1988-1989 (See also: Living Section) Noble, Holcomb B. ("Hoc") (See: Drug Addiction) Norman, Michael (See: Education News) b.1 f.27 Painter, Nell Irving, 1981 b.1 f.28 Palmer, Robert, 1980 Peck, Seymour (See: Cultural News) b.1 f.29 Raftery, Kay, 1976-1977 b.1 f.30 Raines, Susan (Mrs. Howell Raines), 1987 b.1 f.31 Raynor, Vivien, 1982-1987 Reif, Rita (See: Auction Column) b.1 f.32 Rosenthal, A.M., 1976-1985 b.1 f.33 Rosenthal, Andrew, 1986-1988 b.1 f.34 Ryan, Michael S. (Son of Michael E. Ryan), 1986-1988 b.1 f.35 Schwartz, Stephen, 1980-1988 Schwartz, Tony (See: National Broadcasting Company) Siegal, Allan M. (See: News Desk) Siegel, Marvin (See: Cultural News) b.2 f.1-2 Sulzberger, Arthur Ochs, 1976-1989 b.2 f.3 Sulzberger, Arthur Ochs, Jr., 1976-1989 b.2 f.4 White, Theodore, 1983 b.2 f.5 Whitman, Alden, 1976-1980 b.2 f.6 Whitney, Craig, 1988

## **Series II: Subjects, 1949-1989** (11.5 boxes)

This series is made up of alphabetical subject files that are organized (and titled) by topical keywords, institution names, and Times departments and newspaper sections. Files contain memoranda between various departments and cover a range of topics, including staff assignments, department assessments, department budgets, fact-checking and other coverage complaints from story subjects and readers, and space and page make-up decisions. Present here are memoranda about launching several new sections, starting with the weekend section in 1976, and followed by Sports Monday, Science Times, Living, and Home. These files concern financial analysis and circulation prospects for the different sections, as well as the management's editorial approach to coverage, staffing problems, working conditions in the department, and general publication planning.

Of note are the files on Cultural News and Arts and Leisure. As a former drama critic, Gelb took special interest in The Times' culture coverage. These files concern the operations of the culture department, which employed the Times' critics and reporters on art, architecture, theater, music, television, restaurants, and the daily book review – not to be confused with the Sunday Book Review. The files hold memoranda between Gelb and the cultural editors, in particular Seymour Peck, William Honan, and Marvin Siegel. Included are plans to restructure the culture department and readers' mail. Also of note are the New York Times Magazine and Magazine Part II files that reveal the paper's special section development process, as well as conflicts between advertising and editorial space and decisions regarding the special use of color in the section.

Files are arranged alphabetically by file title. Entries without box and folder numbers cross-reference related material in other files.

"About Men" (Column) (See: New York Times Magazine)

Advertising (See: Hart, Schaffner & Marx)

b.2 f.7 AIDS, 1986-1987

Includes memoranda on a series of articles on AIDS and on *The Times'* policy on discussing AIDS and using the terms "survivors," "companions," and "lovers" in obituaries

Airline Fares (See: Editorial Policy)

b.2 f.8 American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), 1979-1983

Mostly correspondence regarding the production of the ASNE bulletin. Gelb was on the editorial board of this publication.

Architecture and Architects (See: Cultural News)

b.2 f.9 Art Department, 1978-1989

Of interest: memoranda regarding the reorganization of the department

Art News and Criticism (See: Cultural News)

Articles and Books By or About Gelb (See: Biography)

b.2 f.10-11 Arts and Leisure Section, 1976-1989

Of interest: memoranda on the operation of the department with an organizational chart (1976); redesign and expansion of the section (1976, 1987); addition of new columns on home video and home electronics (1983)

b.3 f.1 Arts and Leisure Section, 1976-1989

#### Series II: Subjects, 1949-1989 (cont.) b.3 f.2 Associated Press (A.P.), 1987-1988 Mostly correspondence regarding the A.P.'s handling of certain stories, such as an assassination threat to Jesse Jackson "At the Nation's Table" (See: Living Section) Atomic Energy and Weapons (See: Nucleon Lectern Associates, Inc.) b.3 f.3 Auction Column, 1977 b.3 f.4 Awards (To The Times and/or Staff Members), 1988 Awards, Decorations, Honors, and Tributes to Gelb (See: Biography) b.3 f.5 Bicentennial of the Constitution Coverage, 1986 b.3 f.6 Biography, 1949-1989 "Mind and Body" (Column) (See: New York Times Magazine) Book Fair (See: New York Book Fair) b.3 f.7-12 Book Review, 1976-1989 Mostly memoranda on staff assignments, books to be reviewed, choice of reviewers, editorial space, and operations of the department. Also present are letters from readers, reviewers, and publishers. Of interest: proposal and rejection of a literary puzzle (1983); memoranda on extensive changes in design and content of the section (1977); memoranda regarding the introduction of a new method of selecting bestseller books (1977). See also: Cultural News b.3 f.13 Business World, 1985-1989 Of interest: memoranda regarding the editorial content of the first issues of Business World b.4 f.1 Bylines, 1982, 1986 Caption Styles (See: Style) b.4 f.2 Careers Section, 1987 b.4 f.3 Carnegie Hall, 1989 CBS News (See: Public Opinion Surveys) b.4 f.4 Children's Fashion Section, 1985-1987 (Budget records.) Color Printing (See: New York Times Magazine) b.4 f.5 Comic Strips (Living Section), 1976 Company Index (See: Financial News) Computers (See: Science News) Conflicts of Interests (See: Critics and Criticism) b.4 f.6 Cooking Schools Annual Review, 1979-1981 b.4 f.7

b.4 f.8-16 Cultural News, 1946-1989

Of interest: policy about mentioning the prices of works of art in reviews (1988); evaluation of the column "Going Out Guide" (1987); use of illustrations with art reviews (1987)

b.5 f.1-5 Cultural News, 1946-1989

Drawings (See: Graphics)

Critics and Criticism, 1989 (See also: Cultural News)

b.5 f.6 Drug Addiction, 1989

Announcement of a special project to coordinate The Times' coverage of the drug crisis

#### Series II: Subjects, 1949-1989 (cont.) "Eating Well" (Column) (See: Living Section) b.5 f.7 Editorial Policy, 1986-1989 b.5 f.8 Editorial Policy: Elections, 1984-1988 b.5 f.9 Education News, 1976-1989 b.5 f.10 **Electronics**. 1983-1985 Budget records regarding an issue of the New York Times Magazine Part II on electronics b.5 f.11 Enterprise Meetings, 1988 These meetings were designed to generate ideas for investigative projects. b.5 f.12 Family/Style Page and Section, 1976-1989 This department, which was sometimes referred to as the Lifestyle or just the Style department, was responsible for the Living and Home sections, and for fashion, society, and lifestyle news. b.5 f.13 Fashion News, 1985-1989 See also: Children's Fashion News; Men's Fashion; Family/Style Page and Section Films and Videotapes (See: The Glyn Group, Inc.) b.5 f.14 Financial News, 1977-1989 Of interest: memoranda regarding the introduction of the Company Index in the financial section (1987); memoranda concerning the start of a weekly business technology page (1986) Fine, Travis & Associates, Inc. (See: Good Health Magazine) Food News (See: Cooking Schools Annual Review) b.6 f.1 Foreign News, 1977-1989 (See also: Washington Post) b.6 f.2 Freedom of the Press. 1987-1989 Of interest: Correspondence regarding the assault on Times photographer, Angel Franco, by a police officer (1988); correspondence concerning the arrest of Joyce Dopkeen (1987) b.6 f.3 Front Page (Readability), 1987 b.6 f.4 The Glyn Group, Inc., 1982 "Going Out Guide" (See: Cultural News) b.6 f.5 Good Health Magazine, 1985-1989 Of interest: a study by Fine, Travis & Associates, Inc. that evaluated the degree of interest of New York Times readers in a publication about health and fitness b.6 f.6 Graphics, 1988 b.6 f.7-8 The Guide, 1980-1988 Mostly memoranda regarding the launching in 1980 of a new television section called The Guide, and its redesign in 1987-1988, which led to a completely new section called "Television." Also present is a sample of readers' letters concerning The Guide b.6 f.9 Hart, Schaffner & Marx, 1982 b.6 f.10 Headlines, 1986-1987 "Hers" (Column) See: New York Times Magazine; Painter, Nell Irvin b.6 f.11 "Holiday in New York", 1983 Records regarding the planning of a proposed New York Times Magazine Part II b.6 f.12 The Home Section, 1976-1987

#### Series II: Subjects, 1949-1989 (cont.) b.6 f.13 Home Design, 1985-1986 Readership Surveys for the home design section Home Electronics (See: Arts and Leisure Section) b.6 f.14 Home Entertaining, 1985-1987 The section title "Home Entertaining" was changed to "Entertaining" in 1987 Home Video See: Arts and Leisure Section; New York Times Productions Homosexuals (See: Style: Gay) b.7 f.1 Hundred Neediest Cases, 1986 b.7 f.2 Hunter Museum of Art, 1982-1986 b.7 f.3 Index and News Summary, 1986 b.7 f.4 Investigative Reporting, 1986 (See also: Enterprise Meetings) Issue and Debate (See: Cultural News) Leave of Absence (See: News Department: Staff) b.7 f.5 Lifestyles, 1988 (See also: Family/Style Page and Section) b.7 f.6-8 Living Section, 1976-1989 Of interest: planning records for creating the Living Section; memoranda regarding various columns, such as "Eating Well," "At the Nation's Table," Wine," and "Metropolitan Diary;" a sample of readers' mail about the section b.7 f.9 Long Island Weekly Mostly memoranda about the new section for Long Island replacing the Brooklyn-Queens-Long Island section Make-Up (See: News Desk) Maps and Charts (See: Graphics) MBO (Management by Objective Program) See: News Department: Management - MBO Program b.7 f.10 Media News, 1988-1989 b.7 f.11 Men's Fashions, 1985-1989 "Metropolitan Diary" (See: Living Section) b.7 f.12 Metropolitan News, 1976-1989 Of interest: memoranda on the 1988 reorganization of the department b.8 f.1-2 Metropolitan News, 1976-1989 Music (See: Cultural News; Palmer, Robert) NASA (See: Picture Desk) b.8 f.3 National Broadcasting Company, 1980 b.8 f.4 National Edition, 1979-1988 Of interest: memoranda concerning space issues for the new national real estate section (1988) b.8 f.5 National News, 1977-1988 (See also: Washington Page)

#### Series II: Subjects, 1949-1989 (cont.) b.8 f.6 New Jersey Edition and Weekly, 1972-1976 Memoranda regarding The Times' New Jersey edition (1972) and the completely redesigned New Jersey section (1976) b.8 f.7 "The New Season" (New York Times Magazine Part II Culture Section), 1986-1987 b.8 f.8 New York Book Fair, 1981-1986 b.8 f.9 New York Public Library, 1988 b.8 f.10-12 New York Times Magazine, 1976-1988 b.9 f.1-2 New York Times Magazine, 1976-1988 b.9 f.3-4 New York Times Magazine Part II, 1986-1989 Memoranda concerning budget planning and publication schedules for the section. See also: "Business World," Careers Section; Children's Fashion Section; Electronics; Fashion News; Good Health Magazine; "Holiday in New York;" Home Design; Men's Fashion; "New Season;" New York Times Sports Magazine; Science and Technology; "Sophisticated Traveler;" "World of New York;" b.9 f.5 New York Times Productions, 1985 Proposals for a weekend television program and a home video library, both rejected b.9 f.6 New York Times Sports Magazine, 1985-1986 News Analysis (See: Editorial Policy) News Bureaus (See: National News) b.9 f.7 News Content, 1977, 1985-1989 Mostly reports on news and advertising space utilization **News Department** b.9 f.8 Management - MBO Program, 1977-1989 (Management by Objective Program) b.10 f.1-2 Management - MBO Program, 1977-1989 (Management by Objective Program) b.10 f.3 Production, 1977-1989 Mostly memoranda regarding production schedules and closing times for the editions of the paper. Of interest: action plan adopted in 1988 for the flow of edited copy into print b.10 f.4-6 Staff, 1982-1989 Memoranda about minority hiring, staff changes, and starting a writing program for clerks b.10 f.7-9 News Desk, 1986-1989 Primarily memoranda from Allan Siegal, who was resposible for the operation of the news desk, concerning language, style, make-up, and newsroom technology News Quota (See: News Content) b.11 f.1 Newspapers: New York City, 1984 Letter from a former Times employee discussing a combined edition of New York City morning newspapers in 1923 Newsroom Technology (See: News Desk) Nobel Prizes (See: Editorial Policy) b.11 f.2 Nucleon Lectern Associates, Inc., 1985-1987 Consulting agreement for technical assistance for the news room in the event of a nuclear accident b.11 f.3 Obituaries (News), 1986-1988 b.11 f.4 Personal and Private Papers, 1981, 1987

#### Series II: Subjects, 1949-1989 (cont.) b.11 f.5 Picture Desk, 1979-1989 b.11 f.6 Pictures of Gelb (Photographs), 1960s-1970s Police Department of New York City (See: Freedom of the Press) b.11 f.7 Public Opinion Surveys (Polling), 1986-1987 Of interest: memoranda about individual polls conducted by The Times; proposal to syndicate Times polls b.11 f.8 Pulitzer Prizes, 1977, 1985-1989 Includes correspondence regarding Gelb's participation as a member of the Pulitzer nominating jury b.11 f.9 "Questions and Answers", 1987 Comments from several editors on this feature b.11 f.10 "Questions Without Answers", 1985-1986 Memoranda announcing the start of this feature in 1985 and its demise a year later b.11 f.11 Radio and Television News, 1983-1988 See also: Arts and Leisure Section: Cultural News b.11 f.12 Real Estate News, 1981-1988 Reporter's Notebook (See: Editorial Policy) b.11 f.13 Restaurant Reviews, 1982-1987 (See also: Cultural News) b.11 f.14 Review of the Week, 1976-1987 b.11 f.15 Science and Technology, 1988-1989 Proposal for a New York Times Sunday Magazine Part II on science and technology b.11 f.16-18 Science News, 1977-1989 Of interest: memoranda regarding the news coverage of health issues, space shuttles, and computers b.12 f.1 Sophisticated Traveler, 1982-1986 b.12 f.2 Special Sections, 1985-1989 Sports Magazine (See: New York Times Sports Magazine) b.12 f.3-5 Sports News, 1977-1989 Of interest: memoranda on the sports section redesign (1983) b.12 f.6 Style: Caption Styles, 1986 b.12 f.7 Style: Gay, 1987-1989 (Memoranda on the usage of the term "gay") Style Page and Section See: Lifestyles; Family/Style Page and Section b.12 f.8 Sunday Edition, 1983-1989 Theater (See: Cultural News) b.12 f.9 Times Books, Inc., 1976-1988 b.13 f.1-2 Travel and Resort News, 1980-1989 (See also: Sophisticated Traveler) b.13 f.3 Washington Bureau, 1982-1989 b.13 f.4 Washington Talk Page, 1986-1988

Memoranda on the planning for the redesign of the Washington Talk page

# Series II: Subjects, 1949-1989 (cont.)

b.13 f.5	Washington Post, 1986
b.13 f.6	Weekend, 1976-1988
	Wine Column (See: Living Section)
	Women's Fashion (See: Fashion News)
b.13 f.7	World of New York, 1983-1989