

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Repository

Special Collections in Performing Arts, Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742

Creator

Dena J. Epstein (1916 – 2013)

Title

Dena J. Epstein Papers

Date

1938 – 1991

Extent

0.8 linear feet

Languages

English

Preferred Citation

Dena J. Epstein Papers, Special Collections in Performing Arts, University of Maryland, College Park, MD

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION, SCOPE, AND CONTENTS

The Dena J. Epstein Papers contain correspondence, clippings, scholarly material, publication contracts, and grant applications related to the music librarianship and musicology career of Dena J. Epstein. Topics in correspondence include music reference, professional mentorship, conference invitations, and job offers and inquiries. The collection documents Epstein's education in librarianship, the beginning of her library career, and the scope of her mature scholarly and professional influence. Correspondence is mostly of a professional nature with evidence of friendship and mutual respect with colleagues. Formats include written and typed correspondence and printed materials. Correspondents include notable figures in 20th-century music librarianship, such as: John T. Windle, Gladys Chamberlain, Carleton Sprague Smith, Richard S. Hill, Irving Lowens, William Lichtenwanger, George R. Hill, Kurtz Meyers, William McClellan, and Harold Samuel.

There are numerous records of note in this collection, including Epstein's handwritten lecture notes for a freshman library orientation at the University of Illinois in 1941, Epstein's handwritten 1946 application for employment to the Library of Congress, and an annotated draft of "Black Folk Music: The Facts, the Myths, and the Questions to Be Answered" presented at the conference "Music and Dance in 19th Century America" in 1984 at Stony Brook, NY. The Dena J. Epstein Papers represents her national scholarly pursuits and the full trajectory of her professional career.

COLLECTION ARRANGEMENT

This collection is arranged in a single series, Series 1: Papers. Documents remain in original order.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Use and Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions on access or use.

Provenance

Dena J. Epstein donated her professional papers in August 1992 to the University of Maryland, College Park to be incorporated into the Music Library Association Archives (Accession 93-19-MLA). This accession was labeled “Epstein non-MLA related professional papers” with the intent to set a precedent for the repository to collect professional papers of notable music librarians. With the consultation of Melissa E. Wertheimer, MLA Archivist, these records were de-accessioned from the Music Library Association Archives in October 2017 because they did not document Epstein’s activities with MLA. The Dena J. Epstein Papers are now an independent collection in the same repository to which Epstein donated her papers.

Processing Information

Melissa E. Wertheimer processed the collection in 2017. Original order was maintained.

RELATED MATERIALS

- Dena Epstein Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
- Dena Epstein Root & Cady Research Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago, IL
- Dena J. Epstein Papers, Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL
- The Music Library Association Archives, Special Collections in Performing Arts, University of Maryland, College Park, MD

CONTROLLED ACCESS HEADINGS

Personal Names

Epstein, Dena J. Polacheck (1916 – 2013)

Corporate Names

American Antiquarian Society
American Library Association
Country Music Foundation
Music Library Association
Music Library Association – Midwest Chapter
Newark Public Library. Art and Music Department
University of Chicago. Library
University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign campus). Library

Subjects

Banjo music
Black music research
Music—History and criticism
Music—Publishing
Music librarianship
Music libraries

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Dena Julia Polacheck was born in 1916 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music from the University of Chicago in 1937, a Bachelor of Science degree in Library Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana in 1939, and Master of Arts degree in Library Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana in 1943. Her career in music libraries began as a part-time student assistant in the University of Chicago Music Library from 1936 – 1937, and then as a part-time binding assistant at the University of Illinois Library in the binding department from 1938 – 1939. Her first professional position was as a cataloger at the University of Illinois at Urbana, where she catalogued scores and rare books. Her next positions were at the Newark Public Library Art and Music Department in Newark, NJ, first as a junior librarian and then as a senior music librarian. In 1946 she moved to a cataloging position in the Library of Congress Music Division. After she stayed home to raise her children through the 1950s, Epstein returned to the University of Chicago as an Assistant Music Librarian from 1964 – 1986. Epstein served as President of the Music Library Association from 1977 – 1979, and was involved in numerous committees in the organization as both a chair and member. In 1995 she and her husband Morton endowed a grant for the Music Library Association, the Dena Epstein Award for Archival and Library Research in American Music.

Epstein's scholarly output includes entries in music dictionaries and encyclopedias, conference paper presentations, books, and articles about 18th – 19th American music. Her books include *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals* (University of Illinois Press, 1977) and *Music Publishing in Chicago Before 1871* (Information Coordinators, 1969). Epstein's 1969 book was originally published in the Music Library Association's quarterly journal *Notes* in seven installments from 1944 – 1946. Journal articles from later in Epstein's career include: "Way Up North in Dixie: A Black Family's Claim to the Confederate Anthem" (1994), "Frederick Stock and American Music" (1992), "Black Spirituals: Their Emergence into Public Knowledge" (1990), and "The Mysterious WPA Music Periodicals Index" (1989).

Epstein received numerous awards and honors over the course of her career. Epstein was awarded two grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Chicago Folklore Prize, and the Francis Butler Simkins Prize from the Southern Historical Association. She was also granted honorary membership in both the Music Library Association and the American Library Association upon her retirement from academic music librarianship. Just before her death in 2013, Epstein was featured in a documentary film by Jim Carrier, *The Librarian and the Banjo*.

COLLECTION INVENTORY

Box 1	Folder 1	Correspondence – Employment	1938 – 1963
Box 1	Folder 2	Correspondence – Miscellaneous	1939 – 1985
Box 1	Folder 3	Correspondence – Miscellaneous	1973 – 1991
Box 1	Folder 4	Correspondence – Directory of Music Trade [<i>and Music Publishing in Chicago Before 1871</i>]	1958 – 1985
Box 1	Folder 5	Professional Matters	1969 – 1982
Box 1	Folder 6	References	1981 – 1987
Box 1	Folder 7	Grant Application	1964 – 1970
Box 1	Folder 8	Reference Letters	1971 – 1986
Box 1	Folder 9	ICU Cataloging	1976 – 1987
Box 2	Folder 1	Grove 6 [<i>Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians</i>]	1972 – 1973

Box 2	Folder 2	1976 AMS Meeting	1976
Box 2	Folder 3	[Miscellaneous Reference and Research by Others]	Undated
Box 2	Folder 4	American Society for 18 th -century Studies	1978 – 1979
Box 2	Folder 5	Invitations	1974 – 1990
Box 2	Folder 6	Amerigrove [<i>New Grove Dictionary of Music in the United States</i>]	1981 – 1989
Box 2	Folder 7	Chicago Historical Society [Music in Chicago Project]	1981 – 1985
Box 2	Folder 8	Chicago Historical Society [Music in Chicago Project]	1981 – 1985
Box 2	Folder 9	Smithsonian [Conference on Music in America]	1985, 1988
Box 2	Folder 10	[Research by University of Virginia]	1975
Box 2	Folder 11	Stony Brook [State University of New York at Stony Brook: Music and Dance in 19 th -century America Conference]	1983 – 1986
Box 2	Folder 12	[Miscellaneous Correspondence and Conference Invitations]	1981 – 1987