

Victoria University Archives

Finding Aid - John Mercel Robson fonds (2128)

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John Mercel Robson fonds

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Summary information

Repository:	Victoria University Archives
Title:	John Mercel Robson fonds
ID:	2128
Category [alternative]:	Administrators / Faculty personal papers
Date:	1934–1995 (date of creation)
Physical description:	2.24 m of textual records 4 photographs
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	Added by MO: June 3, 2016 Revised by ECN: April 24, 2017 Updated by JT: Sept 21 2018; May 23, 2019
Note [generalNote]:	See also Fonds 2063 - Principal's Office, series 4, subseries 2 - Files on teaching staff (individual names)

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

John Mercel Robson was born on May 26, 1927, in Toronto, to William Renton Mercel Robson and Christina Henderson Sinclair. He studied at Swansea Public School and Runnymede Collegiate Institute and received his B.A. (1951), M.A. (1953), and Ph.D. (1956) from University of Toronto. His PhD thesis, "The Social and Political Thought of J.S. Mill" was supervised by A.S.P. Woodhouse.

In 1953, he married Prof. Ann Provost Wilkinson Robson, and they had three children: William Bertie Provost (born August 9, 1959), John Sinclair Petifer (born December 9, 1960), and Ann Christine Wilkinson (born December 24, 1962).

Robson served as a teaching fellow in the Department of English, University College, from 1952–1954; researcher under G. Tillotson at Birbeck College, University of London, 1954–1956; and instructor with the Department of English, University of British Columbia, 1956–1957. He then joined the Department of English at Victoria College, serving as Assistant Professor from 1958–1963, Associate Professor from 1963–1967, and became Professor in 1967. He also served as Principal of Victoria College from 1971–1976.

Robson's most recognized academic accomplishment was his general editorship of the 33 volume *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*.

He sat on many committees within Victoria University and the University of Toronto, serving as chair of the SGS Dean's Advisory Committee on Admission to the Graduate Faculty and sitting on the Department of English Graduate Planning Committee. In addition, he served as Chairman of the Manuscript Review Committee at the University of Toronto Press from 1975 until his death. He also served as the general editor of the collected papers of Northrop Frye, until his death in 1995.

His other scholarly offices include: Advisory Editor, Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals; Board of Directors, Research Society for Victorian Periodicals; Advisory Board, Victorian Periodicals Review; Advisory Board, Scholarly Publishing; Chairman, Editorial Committee, Disraeli Project, Queen's University; Bentham Committee, University of London; Advisory Board, Bertram Russell Edition, McMaster University; Advisory Board, Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts, Carleton University; Advisory Board, A.M. Klein Edition, Trent University; and Trustee, Dickens Society. He became a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1974, served as its Vic-President from 1980-1982, and its honorary editor in 1984.

Scope and content

Fonds consists of: Correspondence, 1947–1986; Records and memorabilia relating to early education and personal life, 1934–1995; Articles and other writing, 1959–1994; Records relating to research and projects, 1943–1990; Records relating to academic life and community service, 1959–1989; and Photographs, [1951], n.d.

Notes

Title notes

- **Source of title proper:** Title based on the contents of the fonds.

Immediate source of acquisition

Records in accession 1997.104V was transferred by Professor Ann Robson.

Records in accession 2011.08V were acquired from Robson's home in 2008, on behalf of his wife and daughter.

Finding aids

The photographs are described in the photograph database: <http://archival-photos.vicu.utoronto.ca/>

Related material

The University of Toronto Archives and Records Management Services has an oral history of J.M. Robson (B1986–0058).

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published

Access points

- Textual records (documentary form)
- Photographs and art (documentary form)

Series descriptions

Series 2128-1: Correspondence

Date: 1944-1986 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series consists of academic, professional, personal, and family correspondence, 1947-1986. Correspondence with Robson's student, Margaret Atwood, and his graduate supervisor, A.S.P. Woodhouse is included in various files.

Physical description: 1.5 m of textual records

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
2128-1-1997.104V /TR	File - Correspondence 1974-1976	1974-1976		
2128-1-2011.08V 1-1	File - Incoming correspondence and other records 1947-1953	1947-1953		
2128-1-2011.08V 1-2	File - Incoming	1954-1957		
2128-1-2011.08V 1-3	File - Incoming	1954		
2128-1-2011.08V 1-4	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1955		
2128-1-2011.08V 1-5	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1955		
2128-1-2011.08V 2-1	File - Incoming	1956		
2128-1-2011.08V 2-2	File - Outgoing	1944, 1956-1960		
2128-1-2011.08V 2-3	File - Incoming	1958		
2128-1-2011.08V 2-4	File - Incoming	1959		
2128-1-2011.08V 2-5	File - Incoming	1960		
2128-1-2011.08V 2-6	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1961		
2128-1-2011.08V 3-1	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1961		
2128-1-2011.08V 3-2	File - Outgoing	1961		
2128-1-2011.08V 3-3	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1962		
2128-1-2011.08V 3-4	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1962		
2128-1-2011.08V 3-5	File - Outgoing	1962		
2128-1-2011.08V 3-6	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1963		

2128-1-2011.08V 4-1	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1963
2128-1-2011.08V 4-2	File - Outgoing	1963
2128-1-2011.08V 4-3	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1964
2128-1-2011.08V 4-4	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1964
2128-1-2011.08V 4-5	File - Outgoing	1964
2128-1-2011.08V 4-6	File - Incoming correspondence from family 1965	1965
2128-1-2011.08V 4-7	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1965
2128-1-2011.08V 5-1	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1965
2128-1-2011.08V 5-2	File - Outgoing	1965
2128-1-2011.08V 5-3	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1966
2128-1-2011.08V 5-4	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1966
2128-1-2011.08V 5-5	File - Outgoing	1966
2128-1-2011.08V 5-6	File - Incoming correspondence from family 1967	Spring 1967
2128-1-2011.08V 6-1	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1967
2128-1-2011.08V 6-2	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1967
2128-1-2011.08V 6-3	File - Outgoing	1967
2128-1-2011.08V 6-4	File - Incoming	Jan-July 1968
2128-1-2011.08V 6-5	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1968
2128-1-2011.08V 7-1	File - Outgoing	1968
2128-1-2011.08V 7-2	File - Incoming	Jan-July 1969
2128-1-2011.08V 7-3	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1969
2128-1-2011.08V 7-4	File - Outgoing	1969
2128-1-2011.08V 7-5	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1970
2128-1-2011.08V 8-1	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1970
2128-1-2011.08V 8-2	File - Outgoing	1970
2128-1-2011.08V 8-3	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1971
2128-1-2011.08V 8-4	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1971
2128-1-2011.08V 8-5	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1973
2128-1-2011.08V 9-1	File - Incoming	1975
2128-1-2011.08V 9-2	File - Incoming	1976
2128-1-2011.08V 9-3	File - Outgoing	1976
2128-1-2011.08V 9-4	File - Incoming	1977
2128-1-2011.08V 9-5	File - Outgoing	1977
2128-1-2011.08V 9-6	File - Incoming	1978
2128-1-2011.08V 9-7	File - Incoming	1979
2128-1-2011.08V 9-8	File - Incoming	1980
2128-1-2011.08V 9-9	File - Correspondence 1981	1981
2128-1-2011.08V 9-10	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1982
2128-1-2011.08V 9-11	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1982
2128-1-2011.08V 9-12	File - Outgoing	1982
2128-1-2011.08V 10-1	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1983
2128-1-2011.08V 10-2	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1983
2128-1-2011.08V 10-3	File - Outgoing	1983
2128-1-2011.08V 10-4	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1984
2128-1-2011.08V 10-5	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1984
2128-1-2011.08V 10-6	File - Outgoing	1984
2128-1-2011.08V 10-7	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1985
2128-1-2011.08V 10-8	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1985
2128-1-2011.08V 11-1	File - Outgoing	1985
2128-1-2011.08V 11-2	File - Incoming	Jan-June 1986

2128-1-2011.08V 11-3	File - Incoming	July-Dec 1986
2128-1-2011.08V 11-4	File - Outgoing	1986

Series 2128-2: Records and memorabilia relating to early education and personal life

Date: 1934-1995 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series consists of report cards and other records from middle and secondary school, 1934-1947; memorabilia, student publications, lecture notes and essays from Robson's undergraduate years at University College, 1949-1953; programmes and list of passengers on the RMS 'Ascania' Cunard steamship, 1954-1956; matchbooks and pipe cleaners; playbills and other programmes, including one for the funeral of Nicholas Ignatieff, 1952-1984; copies of awards and recognitions received by Robson, likely used in compiling his obituary and other tributes, 1971-1988; and condolences and obituaries, including those received by Ann Robson, 1995.

Physical description: 19 cm of textual records

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
2128-2-2011.08V 11-5	File - Middle school and secondary school	1934-1947		
2128-2-2011.08V 11-6	File - Memorabilia from undergraduate years	1949-1953		
2128-2-2011.08V 12-1	File - Memorabilia from undergraduate years—student publications	1946-1954		
2128-2-2011.08V 12-2	File - School work	1953-1954		
2128-2-2011.08V 12-3	File - Lecture notes, principals of scientific method as applied to psychology	1947-1948		
2128-2-2011.08V 12-4	File - Personal memorabilia	1946-1979		
2128-2-2011.08V 12-5	File - Cunard steamship	1951-1956		
2128-2-2011.08V 12-6	File - Smoking paraphernalia	n.d.		
2128-2-2011.08V 13-1	File - Playbills and other programmes	1952-1984		
2128-2-2011.08V 13-2	File - Awards and recognitions, copies of records	1971-1988		
2128-2-2011.08V 13-3	File - Condolences and obituaries	1995		

Series 2128-3: Articles and other writing

Date: 1959-1994 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series consists of book chapters, articles, talks, reviews, and news articles published and/or delivered by Robson. Includes works by 'H.O. Hmnnn,' a pseudonym used by Robson for satirical or comical

commentary on the state of higher education and other issues. Files contain primarily published works, but in some cases, include drafts and correspondence.

Physical description: 41 cm of textual records

Arrangement:

The first part of the series is arranged according to the order of Robson's CV in the first file. Other writings are kept together in their original files.

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
2128-3-2011.08V 13-4	File - Based on CV binders - CVs	1985-1994		
2128-3-2011.08V 13-5	File - Based on CV binders - Editing nineteenth-century texts	1967		
2128-3-2011.08V 13-6	File - Based on CV binders - James and John Stuart Mill/Papers of the Centenary Conference	1976		
2128-3-2011.08V 13-7	File - Based on CV binders - Chapters	1962-1985		
2128-3-2011.08V 13-8	File - Based on CV binders - Articles	1960-1964		
2128-3-2011.08V 14-1	File - Based on CV binders - Articles	1965-1969		
2128-3-2011.08V 14-2	File - Based on CV binders - Articles	1970-1979		
2128-3-2011.08V 14-3	File - Based on CV binders - Articles	1980-1990		
2128-3-2011.08V 14-4	File - Based on CV binders - H.O. Hmnn writes and talks	1964-1993		
2128-3-2011.08V 14-5	File - Based on CV binders - Talks	1959-1969		
2128-3-2011.08V 14-6	File - Based on CV binders - Talks (includes installation address)	1970-1979		
2128-3-2011.08V 15-1	File - Based on CV binders - Talks (includes installation address)	1980-1989		
2128-3-2011.08V 15-2	File - Based on CV binders - Talks (includes installation address)	1990-1999		
2128-3-2011.08V 15-3	File - Based on CV binders - Reviews, "Light Prose" in "Letters in Canada"	1961-1976		
2128-3-2011.08V 15-4	File - Based on CV binders - Reviews	1959-1969		
2128-3-2011.08V 15-5	File - Based on CV binders - Reviews	1970-1979		
2128-3-2011.08V 15-6	File - Based on CV binders - Reviews	1980-1989		
2128-3-2011.08V 15-7	File - Other writings - Poetry	1963, n.d.		
2128-3-2011.08V 15-8	File - Other writings - Book Parade column	1964		
2128-3-2011.08V 16-1	File - Other writings - Telegram Reviews	1965		
2128-3-2011.08V 16-2	File - Other writings - Telegram Reviews	1966		
2128-3-2011.08V 16-3	File - Other writings - Newspaper writings and other articles	1969-1983		
2128-3-2011.08V 16-4	File - Other writings - Other writings	1982-1983, n.d.		

2128-3-2011.08V 16-5	File - Other writings - Hmnnn and other parodies/writings on education and politics	n.d.
2128-3-2011.08V 16-6	File - Other writings - Reviews of Hmnnn Report and Bill's books	1966-1970

Series 2128-4: Records relating to research and projects

Date: 1943-1990 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series consists, predominantly, of records relating to Robson's work as editor of the collected works of John Stuart Mill, 1943-1989. Includes lists and transcriptions of the correspondence of J.S. Mill, correspondence with academics, librarians and archivists, and a file of correspondence and notes, 1943-1949, given to Robson by Professor F.A. Hayek, who first attempted to bring together the early letters of John Stuart Mill. Series also includes Robson's work on J.S. Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, and other various academic projects.

Physical description: 14 cm of textual records

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
2128-4-2011.08V 16-7	File - J.S. Mill letters, lists and correspondence	1943-1949, n.d.		
2128-4-2011.08V 17-1	File - J.S. Mill General file, additional letters	1954-1990		
2128-4-2011.08V 17-2	File - J.S. Mill collection at Yale	1989		
2128-4-2011.08V 17-3	File - Un-foldered research material on J.S. Mill	1989, n.d		
2128-4-2011.08V 17-4	File - EIOLR xeroxes - J.S. Mill	n.d.		
2128-4-2011.08V 17-5	File - J.S. Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill	n.d.		
2128-4-2011.08V 17-6	File - Mill Taylor Collection	n.d.		
2128-4-2011.08V 17-7	File - Disraeli	n.d.		
2128-4-2011.08V 17-8	File - "Approaches to Literature" series	1962		
2128-4-2011.08V 17-9	File - Proposal for 18th century catalogue	1966		
2128-4-2011.08V 17-10	File - Project on using fiction as historical sources	1965-1970		

Series 2128-5: Records relating to academic life and community service

Date: 1959-1989 (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Series consists of correspondence, news clippings, reports, and other records relating to Robson's contributions to various professional, academic, and extra-curricular groups, 1959-1989. These include participation in various studies of English curriculum and education with the Ontario Department of Education and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), 1964-1968, and

in the International Forum Foundation and International Teach-In, 1966-1968. Series also includes administrative records relating to his teaching career and principalship at Victoria College, 1967-1982 and involvement with the Royal Society of Canada, 1984-1989.

Physical description: 18 cm of textual records

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
2128-5-2011.08V 18-1	File - National fund for the University of Toronto	1959-1960		
2128-5-2011.08V 18-2	File - Ontario Curriculum Institute	1964		
2128-5-2011.08V 18-3	File - Ontario Department of Education	1966-1968		
2128-5-2011.08V 18-4	File - OISE, English Study Committee	1967		
2128-5-2011.08V 18-5	File - Macbeth video, Ontario Dept. of Education	1968		
2128-5-2011.08V 18-6	File - IFF [International Forum Foundation]	1966-1968		
2128-5-2011.08V 18-7	File - International Teach-In	1966-1967		
2128-5-2011.08V 18-8	File - International Teach-In	1966-1968		
2128-5-2011.08V 19-1	File - International Teach-In - news clippings	1966		
2128-5-2011.08V 19-2	File - Theses (active)	1967-1969		
2128-5-2011.08V 19-3	File - Installation as Victoria College Principal [programme and address]	1971		
2128-5-2011.08V 19-4	File - Dept. of English, merit increases	1982		
2128-5-2011.08V 19-5	File - Royal Society Newsletter (editor)	1984-1985		
2128-5-2011.08V 19-6	File - Royal Society of Canada	1986-1989		

Accession 2128-2011.08: Photographs

Date: [1951]; n.d. (date of creation)

Scope and content:

Consists of 2 photos of the U.C. Literary and Athletic Society [1951], of which Robson was President, a photograph of John and Ann Robson, and a photograph of Robson at an unidentified event.

Physical description: 4 photographs

Immediate source of acquisition:

2011.08 - acquired from Robson's home in 2008, on behalf of his wife and daughter.

Finding aids:

Photographs are described in the photograph database: <http://archival-photos.vicu.utoronto.ca/>

Publication status:

Published
File / item list