Edward R. Murrow (1908–1965)

Edward R. Murrow was a prominent CBS broadcaster during the formative years of American radio and television news programs. Stationed in London for CBS Radio from 1937 to 1946, Murrow assembled a group of erudite correspondents who came to be known as the “Murrow Boys” and included one woman, Mary Marvin Breckinridge. Their World War II broadcasts from London, Europe, Africa, and Asia set the standards for U.S. foreign news broadcasting. They also helped shape the public’s view of a war that Americans were at first reluctant to be drawn into.

Returning to the U.S. in 1946, Murrow became one of the most renowned radio and television news broadcasters of his time. Particularly famous were his programs Hear It Now, This I Believe, Person to Person, See It Now, and Years of Crisis. Among his award-winning programs are his 1954 broadcast about Senator Joseph McCarthy’s persecution of presumed Communists and his 1960 documentary Harvest of Shame, which depicted the plight of migrant farm workers. From 1961 to January 1964, Murrow served as the director of the United States Information Agency (USIA). He died of cancer on April 27, 1965.

The Edward R. Murrow Papers, ca 1913–1985

Edward R. Murrow’s papers consist of approximately 55 linear feet of documents, over 320 photographs, about 1,700 books, memorabilia as well as phonographs, and film and audio-tape reels of various formats. Dating largely from 1934 to 1965, the material includes correspondence, personal materials, work and activities-related files, audiovisual materials, memorabilia, books, and tributes to Murrow upon his death. The papers enable patrons to research Murrow’s career at the International Institute of Education, at CBS, and at USIA and to trace major developments in the history of broadcasting at CBS and in the U.S.
Collection Highlights
Murrow’s correspondence (approximately 1/5 of the collection) covers his professional career until 1961. Letters tell of historical and current issues; deal with key topics, special events, and broadcasts; cover administrative details; reveal reactions to his work from viewers and listeners; and include his communication with prominent individuals such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Edward Klauber, and Carl Sandburg. Included are requests for appointments, invitations to speak, and appeals from charities and friends. Proposals for future programs are often accompanied by supporting documentation.

Murrow’s work files primarily cover his years as associate director of the Institute of International Education, 1932–1935, and as director of CBS Talks and Special Events, and as correspondent and administrator at CBS from 1935 to 1961 (approximately 1/3 of the collection). CBS files concern administration, program and business operations, and include correspondence, background research, and nine regularly scheduled programs in addition to special programs and sponsors. Only a few folders cover Murrow’s work as director of USIA, including copies of his statement before the Senate confirmation hearing, copies of his reports and speeches, and a few letters.

The collection contains phonographs produced by Murrow, numerous broadcast scripts, speeches, publications, and documents related to his extracurricular activities. Since Murrow usually dictated his scripts to his secretaries, scripts in the collection either show his handwritten corrections and stress marks or, in rare cases, they are corrected examples of his own typing. Audio and film reels by the BBC, CBS, and others include reissues of historical broadcasts, Murrow’s obituary film, and reels of original radio and television broadcasts.
Among his personal papers are correspondence, biographical material, letters regarding publicity matters, condolence letters after his death, as well as photographs, calendars, furniture, honorary degrees, citations, awards, and pictures. Over 320 photographs documenting all stages of his professional career as well as numerous trips and his private life are available online at http://dl.tufts.edu (search for Murrow images).

Murrow’s books are on display in the Edward R. Murrow Memorial Reading Room at The Fletcher School, Tufts University, and contain first editions, dedications, and autographs by authors, friends, and celebrities.

Access Restrictions
Murrow’s papers are open for use except for audiovisual material. Due to necessary preservation work, this material currently cannot be used. Exceptions are This I Believe broadcasts that will be digitized and open for research when funding becomes available.

Related papers
**Murrow-Related Collections at Other Archives**

**Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections, South Hadley, MA, USA**


The Edward R. and Janet Brewster Murrow papers contain correspondence, diaries, writings, subject files, biographical information, photographs, and other materials. Of particular note are letters and scripts documenting Murrow’s World War II work as director of European broadcasts for CBS, Inc. and Ms. Murrow’s activities as executive director of the London Committee of the Bundles for Britain relief agency. The collection is open for use and partially described at: [http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/mountholyoke/mshm242_main.html](http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/mountholyoke/mshm242_main.html)
Contact: archives@mtholyoke.edu

**Washington State University, Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Pullman, WA, USA**

The Edward R. Murrow collection contains 122 photographs dating from 1909 to 1964 plus 8 documents.

**National Archives, Washington, D.C., USA**

Murrow’s USIA records are kept as part of the records of the United States Information Agency Record Group 306.

**CBS News Reference Library, New York, NY, USA**

Upon written request and approval, academic researchers and authors can use Murrow-related transcripts, press material, speeches, and statements, primarily from 1950 to 1961.
Tel: 212.975.2877
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http://dca.tufts.edu/features/murrow
At the website, patrons will find an exhibit about Edward R. Murrow’s life and work as well as collection information. This brochure can be downloaded from the website.

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