Finding Aid for

HERMAN MILLER COLLECTION, 1923-2006
(BULK 1934-2000)

Accession 89.177

Finding Aid Republished: June 2016
OVERVIEW

REPOSITORY: Benson Ford Research Center
The Henry Ford
20900 Oakwood Blvd
Dearborn, MI 48124-5029
www.thehenryford.org
research.center@thehenryford.org

ACCESSION NUMBER: 89.177

CREATOR: Herman Miller, Inc.

TITLE: Herman Miller Collection

INCLUSIVE DATES: 1923-2006

BULK DATES: 1934-2000

QUANTITY: 31.8 cubic ft. (50 boxes)

LANGUAGE: The materials are in English

ABSTRACT: Herman Miller, Inc. is a furniture company based in Zeeland, Michigan. The collection is primarily comprised of trade catalogs, product literature, and publications documenting the furniture, its designers, and the company’s history.
ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

ACCESS RESTRICTIONS: The collection is open for research.

TECHNICAL RESTRICTIONS: Use of original video and audio tapes, floppy disks, and compact discs contained in the collection is restricted. Access may be unavailable due to lack of appropriate software and hardware, or use copies may need to be produced unless otherwise noted. Researchers interested in this material should contact Benson Ford Research Center staff (research.center@thehenryford.org).

COPYRIGHT: Copyright has been transferred to the Henry Ford by the donor. Copyright for some items in the collection may still be held by their respective creator(s).

ACQUISITION: Donation, 1989 and ongoing.

RELATED MATERIAL: Related material held by The Henry Ford:
- Robert Propst Collection, Accession 2010.83
- Bill Stumpf Collection, Accession 2009.141
- Don Chadwick Oral Interview, Accession 2009.119

Related material held outside The Henry Ford:
ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION continued:

ALTERNATIVE FORMS: Digital images of selected collection material can be found online at:
- Herman Miller Consortium collection
  [http://digital.library.wayne.edu/digitalcollections/item?id=wayne:collectionHermanMiller](http://digital.library.wayne.edu/digitalcollections/item?id=wayne:collectionHermanMiller)
- The Henry Ford Online Collections

PREFERRED CITATION: Item, folder, box, accession 89.177, Herman Miller collection, Benson Ford Research Center, The Henry Ford

PROCESSING INFORMATION: Collection processed by Erin Mulloy, October 2005.


Finding aid prepared using Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS) and local guidelines.
HISTORICAL NOTE

In 1905 the Star Furniture Company, which would later become Herman Miller, was started by a group of businessmen. The main customer at the time was Sears Roebuck who bought the traditional style of furniture the company produced. In 1909 the company changed its name to the Michigan Star Furniture Company. It was in that year that D.J. Depree joined on at the company as an office boy. By the year 1919, he was its president. In 1923, D.J. DePree, his father-in-law Herman Miller, and a small group of investors purchased major stock in the company, changing the name to the Herman Miller Company. In 1959, the company incorporated and took on its current name, Herman Miller, Inc. D.J. DePree retired in 1962, and his son Hugh took over as president and CEO, followed later by his brother Max in 1980.

In the 1930s, a New York designer by the name of Gilbert Rohde became associated with Herman Miller, Inc. and that association lasted into the 1940s. At the time of his arrival the company was making traditional style furniture. Rohde convinced DePree to take on a more contemporary style of furniture and made Herman Miller, Inc. the leader in the modern furniture industry. In 1942, the company began to make office furniture, manufacturing Rohde’s Executive Office Group of modular desk systems. At this time the company presented Rohde’s marketing concepts in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles.

Gilbert Rohde died in 1946 leading the way for George Nelson to step in. Nelson was a writer, editor, and designer at Herman Miller, Inc. He designed storage components, sofas, chairs, and desks. His designs were featured in the company product line from the late 1940s through the 1950s. Nelson was responsible for bringing other great designers on board such as Alexander Girard, Isamu Noguchi, and Charles and Ray Eames. Eames played an important role with the company, becoming internationally known. With the introduction of molded plywood, fiberglass and stacking chairs, Herman Miller became known the world over.

During the coming decades the company continued to grow. In 1958, a large new manufacturing facility was built. In the 1960s, Robert Propst created Action Office, and in 1970 the company offered stock publicly for the first time. Diversification brought about a new manufacturing plant in England, a chair line called Ergon created by designer Bill Stumpf, an expanded participatory employee plan was put into action, and the creation of the Facility Management Institute in Ann Arbor, Michigan was developed. Herman Miller focused on the education of employees and company needs which fueled the purchase of Marigold Lodge. Built in the style of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, the lodge has been designated a state and national historic site. It provides a quiet atmosphere for work and planning sessions. It parallels the way in which the company dedicates itself to peace, nature, and the environment.

During the 1980s, Herman Miller introduced new office furniture designs, opened new manufacturing plants in Michigan, Georgia and California, added subsidiaries in the United States, and constructed new facilities in England and France. In addition, branches were established in the Far East, Australia and the Middle East. The year 1984 alone produced the Equa chair and Ethospace system. The Equa chair set new standards in comfort, and Ethospace became the first architecture office system. A decade later in 1994, Herman Miller began to manufacture and sell classic Eames and Nelson pieces.
for the home. Also in 1994 came a breakthrough in comfort design with the Aeron chair. This chair is now a part of museum collections world wide.

Today Herman Miller still holds its place as one of the top furniture design companies, being listed in Fortune magazine as among the Most Admired Companies in the United States and by Industry Week as one of the world’s 100 Best Managed Companies. It is known not just for its office systems but for its home furniture not just in the United States, but in the world over.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection is made up of eight series and a 2006 Addendum. The bulk of the material is comprised of trade catalogs and product literature covering several years. The material covers the company history, designers, publications, presentations used, advertising and price books, as well as other various pieces of literature.

_The Company History series_, 1975-1994, contains biographical sketches, company profiles, timelines, master plans and designs, and information on Marigold Lodge which plays a significant role in the company’s history.

_The Product Literature series_, 1946-2004, includes price books and trade catalogs. The price books run from 1946 to August of 2004. Price books list the prices of the manufactured products from Herman Miller throughout those years. Microfiche of price books, which run from 1946 to 1991, are also located here. Trade catalogs center on the many different types of furniture and office systems that Herman Miller provide, such as: Passage, Action Office, Resolve, and Ethospace. It also looks at seating, tables, textiles, and other forms of Herman Miller furniture such as: Storage Systems, Integrated Systems, and Choices, which are many different pieces of Herman Miller furniture placed into one catalog or book.

_The Publications series_, 1936-2005, contains magazine articles that run from 1936 to 2005. It also contains newspaper clippings from 1934-1954 and Herman Miller publications such as: reports, research summaries, and shareholder information, as well as information and research on Ergonomics.

_The Designers series_, 1955-2004, deals with information on past and present designers of Herman Miller and has them listed alphabetically along with two binders that have collective information on a variety of designers and the products they created for Herman Miller. It also contains Oral History tapes as well as typed transcripts of those tapes from several of the designers.

_The Presentations series_, 1984-2001, primarily comprised of video tapes and compact discs. Compact disks make up power-point presentations and video tapes are largely corporate profiles. Slides also are included which picture different pieces of Herman Miller furniture.
The Advertising series, 1936-2004, is made up of cards, booklets, pamphlets, and binders. This material was used to promote and sell Herman Miller merchandise. The material is arranged by date within separate subject and alphabetized.

The Miscellaneous series, 1961-2004, is arranged by subject. Material is organized by date within each subject and then alphabetized.

The 2006 Addendum, 1978-2006, is comprised of a variety of product literature, publications, reports, sales guides, price books etc. arranged by date.

The Unprocessed series (1 cubic ft.) consists primarily of product literature, but also includes annual reports, President's reports and reports to shareholders.

ARRANGEMENT

The Herman Miller Collection consists of 8 series and an addendum:

- Company History series
- Product Literature series
  - Price Books subseries
  - Trade Catalogs subseries
  - Oversize Product Literature subseries
- Publications series
  - Non Herman Miller Publications subseries
  - Herman Miller Publications subseries
  - Oversize Publications subseries
- Designers series
- Presentations series
- Advertising series
- Miscellaneous series
- 2006 Addendum
  - 1978-2000 Published Material subseries
  - 2001-2005 Product Literature and Price Books subseries
  - 2005-2006 Product Literature and Price Books subseries
- Unprocessed series
SUBJECT TERMS

Names, Personal and Corporate
Chadwick, Don, 1936-
Eames, Charles, 1907-1978
Eames, Ray, 1912-1988
Girard, Alexander, 1907-1993
Nelson, George, 1908-1986
Propst, Robert, 1921-
Rohde, Gilbert, 1894-1944
Stumpf, William, 1936-
Herman Miller, Inc.
Herman Miller, Inc.--History

Subjects
Furniture
Furniture--Marketing
Furniture design
Furniture designers
Office furniture
Sales promotion

Genre and Form
Oral histories
Trade catalogs
Microfiche
Color transparencies
Floppy disks
Videocassettes
Audiocassettes
Audio tape
Photographic negatives
Optical disks
Compact discs
### BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box no.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMPANY HISTORY</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Box 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Book, “A Modern Consciousness,” 1975</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biographical Sketches, 1986-1987</td>
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<td>Biography on D. J. DePree, 1978-1990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brief History by Innovative Strategy and Design, 1992-1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>Company Profile, undated</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Company Timelines, 1981-1986</td>
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<td>D.J. DePree Oral History Transcript with Tape, July 26, 1985</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herman Miller Built on Research and Design Paper, 1985</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Herman Miller Master Plan, 1974</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Herman Miller Publication and Promise Statement, 1949 and 1991</td>
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<td>Histomap Project and Memo, 1987</td>
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<td>Information on Marigold Lodge, 1989</td>
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<td>List of furniture sold to other institutions, 1956 and 1963</td>
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<td>Pamphlets, 1978</td>
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<td>Press Release, 1998</td>
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<td>Regional Sale Meetings with Huge DePree, 1979</td>
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<td>Speeches, 1979-1993</td>
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<td>Book “Who is Herman Miller?”, 1984</td>
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<td><strong>Box 41 (oversize)</strong></td>
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<td>Timeline of Corporate History with Negatives, 1923-1950</td>
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</table>

### PRODUCT LITERATURE

**Price Books**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Box 2</th>
<th>January 1962- February 1976</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 3</td>
<td>February 2, 1976- April 18, 1983</td>
</tr>
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<td>Box 4</td>
<td>April 18, 1983- May 6, 1985</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 5</td>
<td>May 6, 1985- July 1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 6</td>
<td>July 20, 1987- May 1, 1989</td>
</tr>
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Box 7  
May 1, 1989- June 4, 1990

Box 8  
June 4, 1990- September 3, 1991

Box 9  
September 3, 1991- October 1991

Box 10  
January 6, 1992- March 1, 1993

Box 11  
March 1, 1993- June 5, 1995

Box 12  
June 5, 1995- September 1, 1996

Box 13  
October 1, 1996- March 1, 1999

Box 14  
May 28, 1999- October 1999

Box 15  
January 2000- September 4, 2001

Box 16  
September 4, 2001- August 2, 2004

Trade Catalogs

Action Office
  Action Lab Information, 1981-1983
  Action Office 2 Installation Manual, undated
  Encore Installation Manual, January 1990
  Encore Planning Guide, 1988
  Encore, Planning Options, Documentation Tools, 1988
  Guides, 1976-1995
  Installation Manual, July 1990

Box 17  
Microfiche, 1946-1991
Box 18

Pamphlets, 1982
Photocopied Papers, 1987
Product Guide, October 1, 1987
Research Handbooks, 1976-1981
Research Handbook, 1979
Series 1 and 2 Installation Manual, November 2000
Series 2 Planning Guide
  1991 July
  1998 April
Series 2 Planning Guide Addendum, February 2000
Series 2 and 3 Planning Guides, January-May 1993
Series 3 Panels Installation Manual, November 1992
Series 3 Planning Guides, May 1991
Service Parts Manual, April 1996
Slides, Encore, 1989 (35mm color transparencies)
Beirise Collection Information
  General information, 1996
  Slides, 1997 (35mm color transparencies)
Burdick Group (see also Box 37, Three Ring Binder, 1985)
  Booklets, 1980-1987
  Planning Information and Photocopies, 1991
Choices (see also oversized Box 40)
  10 Day or Less Catalog, 2002
  Booklets, 1973-2003
  Floppy A, User Adjustment, 1996 (1 3.5 inch diskette)
  Information Sheets, 1991-2004
  Service Parts Books, 1981-1984
  Slides, Different Furniture, 1997 (35mm color transparencies)
  Slides, Photocopies, 1997
  Specification Book, July 1, 1980

Box 19

Ethospace
  Booklets, 1984-2002
  Design and Planning Information, 1988
  Installation Manual, 1992
  Pictures and Cards, 1987-2000
  Planning Guide
    1985 June
    1987
    1992 May

Integrated Systems
- Photocopies, undated
- Product Catalog
  - 1979
  - 1980 October

Liaison System
- General Information, 1993-1994
- Installation Manual, July 1993
- Planning Guides, May 1993 and February 1994

Milcare
- Booklets, 1972-1997 and 1999-2005 (2 folders)
- Pamphlets/Information, 1983, 1996
- PEAK Program, 1990
- Sheets of Information, 1993-1999
- Storage and Transport Solutions, 1999

Box 20

Passage
- Desking System, 2001
- Freestanding Furniture System Books, 1998, 1999
- Furniture Cards and Model Packets, undated
- Planning Guide, April 1999

Phoenix Designs System Information, 1990-1996

Q System
- Booklets, 1996-2001
- Handbook, 2001
- Service Parts Manual, November 1997

Relay
- Guides, 1990-1992
- Tear Sheets, Pictures, Poster, 1990-1994
- Understanding Relay Book, 1991

Resolve (see also oversize box 44)
- Booklets, 2000
- Booklets, 2001-2003
- Cards, 1999
- Guides, 2000-2002
- Installation Manual, September 2000
- Packets, 2002

Storage Systems
- Information Sheets, 1986-2005
Box 21

System Bridge
- Wall Information, 1997-1999
- Wall Installation Manual, June 1999

Textiles (see also oversize box 44)
- CMF Information Packet with Photocopies, 1998
- Color/Material Booklets, 1977 and 1998-2004
- Color/Material/Finish Booklets, 1997
- Color/Material Pamphlets/Information, 1989-2003
- Textile Alliance Program, November 2001-March 2003

V-Wall
- Booklets, 1983-1996

Other Office Systems
- Accents Collection Information, 1999, 2002
- Arrio Freestanding Furniture
  - Planning Options, October 1996 and 1997
- Avive Collection, 2003
- Computer/Work Organizer Information, 2002
- Contracts Products Catalog, June 1979
- Geneva Furniture Information, January 1993
- JB Collection Information, 1995
- Kiva Collection Information, 1999, 2002
- Levity Collection Information, 2000
- M Collection Typicals, 2004
- Newhouse Group
- Planning Information, June 1994 and September 1996
- Privacy Panel Information, undated
- Product Catalog, 1982
- Prospects Planning Guide Addendum, May 2000
- Prospects System Information, 2001
- Puzzle Mobile Office Pictures, 1998
- Sanford Collection Planning Information, October 1991
- Sign System Booklet, 1972
- Sprezzatura Collection Information, 1988
- SQA Catalog, 2001
- Steel Frame Furniture Information, 1954-1959
- TD Collection Information, 1994
- TJ Collection Home/Office Planning Kit, 1999
Seating
Folders 1974-1995

Box 22
Pamphlets/Information 1980-2003
Tear Sheets, 1992-2004
Tables (see also oversized Box 40)
Information Sheets, 1972-2004
Pamphlets, 1990-1999
Tear Sheets, 1987-1998

Box 37
Oversize Product Literature
Action Office
Master Literature File, 1978-1984
Planning Guide Three Ring Binder, 1978
Three Ring Binder, 1985 (includes Burdick Group)
Textile Three Ring Binder, 2001

Box 38
Other Office Systems
Presentation Binder, 1987
Presentation Notebook, 1976

Box 39
See also Advertising, Box 40)

PUBLICATIONS
Non Herman Miller Publications
Articles (see also oversized Box 41)
1936-2006 (59 folders)

Box 23
Clippings, 1934-1950

Box 24
Clippings, 1950-1954
**Herman Miller Publications** (see also Boxes 41 and 42)

General, 1934-1952

**Box 25**

General, 1968-2005

**Box 26**

Reports
- Annual Reports
  - 1957-1999
- Employees, 1979-1983
- Shareholder Information, 1978-1986 (2 folders)
- Research Reports
  - 1973-1977

**Box 27**

1977-2005
- Research Summaries, 1989-1997 (29 folders)

**Box 41 (oversized)**

**Oversize Publications**
- *Blueprint*, June 1989 (magazine)
- *Designing Liaison Environments*, 1993
- *Resolve*
- *Road Signs*, 1999

**Box 42 (oversized)**

- Catalog, 1941
- Catalog Supplement, 1940
- EOG Catalog, 1942

**DESIGNERS**

**Box 28**

- Designer Biographies
  - Beirise - Hollington

**Box 29**

- Ivicevic - Stumpf
- Information on Collective/Various Designers, 1955-1995
Box 30
Oral Interview Tapes
Chadwick - Harper (Original interviews on recorded on audiocassettes; digital use copies are available and housed with originals.)

Box 31
Nelson - Rohde (Original interviews on recorded on audiocassettes; digital use copies are available and housed with originals.)

Box 32
Oral Interview Transcripts
Chadwick - Rohde

Boxes 43 and 49 (oversized)

Box 44 (oversized)
Resolve Fabric Color Samples, undated
Kira Textile Design Samples, 2004

PRESENTATIONS
Boxes 33-34
VHS tapes, 1984-1990 (Note: Use of original video tapes in the collection is restricted and use copies may need to be produced unless otherwise noted. See Technical Restrictions, page 3, for more detail.)

Box 45 (oversized)
Product Presentations, Catalogs and Computer Design Data, 1996-2001 (material on compact discs and optical disks. Use may be restricted. See Technical Restrictions, page 3, for more detail.)

ADVERTISING
Box 35
Booklets, 1984-1995
Caper Notebook, undated
Cards, 1995-2003
Flyers, Maps, Pamphlets, 1979-1998
Sales Bulletins 1936 and 1967
Try A Chair Campaign, 1995-2000

Box 40 (oversized)
Dealer Ads, 1995-1998 (4 binders)
User Orientation Packet, 1978
MISCELLANEOUS

Box 35
Bibliographies, 1982-1986
Booklets, 1966-2000

Box 36
Cost/Warranty Booklets, 1979-2004
Drawn Out Plan and Perspective, June 1, 1983
Exercise Poster, 1979
Film/Video Catalogs, 1987
Innova Company Information, 1987
Installations, 1961-1966
Service Net Program, 1988-1990
System Templates, 1981-1993
Telecommunication/Worksite Program, 1996-1999
Various pamphlets/flyers, 1976-2000

2006 ADDENDUM

Box 46
1978-2000 Published Material (18 folders; Includes Product Literature, Reports, Historical Background, Sales Guides)

Box 47
2001-2005 Product Literature and Price Books (6 folders; Includes HM for Health Care)

Box 48
2005-2006 Product Literature and Price Books (18 folders)

UNPROCESSED

Box 50
Unprocessed Material (1 cubic ft.; primarily product literature, annual reports and President's reports)