

**The Avodah K. Offit Papers
1931-2015
Finding Aid**



Archives and Special Collections



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Photograph on previous page courtesy of Sidney Offit.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Accession Number: 17-01

Creators: Avodah K. Offit and Sidney Offit

Title: The Avodah K. Offit Papers

Date span: 1948-2015

Physical description: Approximately 2 cubic feet of mostly paper documents and books, with a few photographs.

Language: Materials mostly in English, with a few articles and books translated into French, German, Korean, and Spanish.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Restrictions on access: Access to all materials, except for public documents, such as published items intended for distribution outside the College, is unrestricted.

Terms governing use and reproduction: Documentation is intended for reference and other approved College-related uses as authorized. The Avodah K. Offit Papers are not for reproduction, distribution, or deposit in another collection, except with explicit written permission. If use in an approved publication is provided, cite: The Avodah K. Offit Papers, Archives & Special Collections, Hunter College Libraries, Hunter College of The City University of New York.

Acquisition information: Gift of Sidney Offit.

Archivist: Lauren Stark

Date of finding aid: September 6, 2017

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Dr. Avodah K. Offit's legacy as an innovator in understanding the psychological basis of human sexuality is evident in her career as a psychiatrist, psychotherapist, and author. She was born on November 18, 1931, in New York, New York. After graduating from Hunter High School in 1948 and Hunter College in 1952, she married Sidney Offit and raised two sons. In 1967, she received her medical degree from New York University Medical School and completed her internship at Lenox Hill Hospital. After completing a residency at Payne Whitney Psychiatric Clinic of New York Hospital, she joined its staff, eventually becoming the Associate Director of the Sexual Treatment Program. She was an assistant professor of psychiatry at Cornell University Medical College and rose to the level of Director at the Sexual Therapy Center of Lenox Hill Hospital. In 1971, she also began a private psychiatric practice. In addition, she was a psychiatric consultant for the New York Association for the Blind.

Dr. Offit was a prolific writer. She published three books, *The Sexual Self* (1977), *Night Thoughts: Reflections of a Sex Therapist* (1981), and *Virtual Love* (1994), a novel. *The Sexual Self* has been translated into three languages, selected by the Literary Guild and *Psychology Today* Book Club, and reviewed with acclaim by *Psychology Today* and *The New York Times Book Review*. *Night Thoughts*, also a Literary Guild selection, received accolades from the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New Republic*, and *Publisher's Weekly*, among others. *Virtual Love* was one of the first novels to explore the effects of the internet on life and love. In addition to these books, Dr. Offit wrote a column for *Glamour Magazine*, "Your Sexual Self" (1982-1983), and numerous articles in *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Self*, and many others. In addition, she authored book reviews, in such publications as *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*, and she was the subject of many interviews, some about her books and others about her expertise. Furthermore, her writing on sexual dysfunction appeared in medical journals such as *Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality*, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, and *Psychiatry 1982 Annual Review*.

As an expert in the field of sexuality, Dr. Offit appeared on various television news programs and talk shows such as the *The Phil Donahue Show*, *Good Morning America*, and *Charlie Rose*. She also delivered numerous lectures at Harvard University, Columbia University, and Albert Einstein College, to name a few.

Dr. Offit's papers contain a wealth of information for students, researchers, and professors in the fields of psychiatry and sex therapy.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection mostly consists of paper documents and books that chronicle Avodah K. Offit's career as a psychiatrist specializing in sexuality. The majority of the paper documents are copies of publications (series 4), either magazine and journal articles; book reviews written by Offit; reviews of Offit's books; citations to Offit and her work; and interviews with Offit. Many of these publications are photocopies. There are a few copies of her books (various editions and languages) plus a few books written by her husband, Sidney Offit. All books are located in Special Collections (SC). The bulk of the collection covers 1970s-early 2000s. Additionally, there is some material on her personal life (series 1), including medical certificates, articles and manuscripts by family members, family photographs, and a curriculum vita. There are a few items pertaining to her career (series 2), such as awards and honors received, lectures delivered, symposia attended, and letterhead utilized. Series 3 consists of a limited number of correspondence, mostly with publishers, interviewers, and colleagues. Finally, series 5 contains publicity for Offit's books, lectures, and magazine column.

ARRANGEMENT NOTE

The collection is arranged into five series: [1] Personal and Biographical; [2] Career; [3] Correspondence; [4] Writing; and [5] Publicity.

SERIES DESCRIPTION AND CONTAINER LIST

SERIES I – PERSONAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION, 1948-2015

Scope and Content Note

This series mostly contains biographical material about Avodah K. Offit; subseries one focuses on her education, from high school through medical school. Subseries two consists of various items related to her family, such as articles and books written by her husband and son, a wedding announcement for her son, and correspondence with her mother, among others. Subseries three consists of a few photographs of Offit, mostly from the 1950s-1970s, and one photograph of her with family members. Subseries four includes a medical certificate and copy of her curriculum vitae. Subseries five includes items related to her memorial service, such as the program, guest book, and obituary, and a few other miscellaneous items.

Arrangement note

Arranged into five subseries: (1) Education; (2) Family; (3) Photographs; (4) Professional; and (5) Other.

Subseries 1 – Education

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	1	Hunter College High School diploma (framed), February 3, 1948
1	2	Medical certificates, 1995-1999

Subseries 2 – Family

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	3	Copies of articles written by Kenneth Offit (son) for the <i>Boston Herald American</i> and <i>The New York Times</i> , August 1981 and September 1994, respectively
1	4	Wedding announcement in <i>The New York Times</i> for Kenneth Offit, November 13, 1983
1	5	Anniversary poems from Sidney Offit (husband), 1987-2014
1	6	Article by Sidney Offit in <i>The New York Observer</i> , August 1988 (photocopy)
1	7	“My Story” manuscript by Joan Schepps (cousin) with notes from Sidney

1	8	Offit, December 2000 and March 2005, respectively “Aspects of a Marriage” manuscript by Sidney Offit (intended as a joint memoir with Avodah Offit), early 2000s
SC	-	<i>Memoir of the Bookie’s Son</i> , by Sidney Offit, reprint, The Beckham Publications Group, 2003 (paperback) [signed copy]
1	9	Poem from her mother, Carrie Komito, May 2004
1	10	Journal entry by Sidney Offit, January 27, 2015
SC	-	<i>Sidney Offit: A Tribute by His Friends, Colleagues, The Authors Guild, The Authors Guild Foundation, and The Authors League Fund</i> , The Authors Guild, 2016 (2 signed paperbacks)

Subseries 3 – Photographs

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically (inferred).

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	11	Portraits of Avodah Offit (mostly black and white and various sizes), 1950s-2010s
1	12	Sidney and Avodah Offit with two grandchildren (color), undated but probably 1990s

Subseries 4 – Professional

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically, then alphabetically.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	13	Certificate from the American Medical Association, 1994
1	14	Curriculum vitae, 1994

Subseries 5 – Other

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	15	Obituary from <i>The New York Times</i> , memorial service program, and guest book, January 2015
1	16	HF Holidays contribution in memory of Offit by her husband, Sidney, June 2015
1	17	Horoscope (undated) and obituary for Arnon Fortgang, February 1976

SERIES II – CAREER, 1973-2015

Scope and Content Note

This series focuses on Offit's career as a psychiatrist. Subseries one includes awards and honors received and created, such as inclusion in the Phi Beta Kappa Association and the establishment of the Avodah K. Offit Award for Excellence in Writing at Hunter College High School.

Subseries two covers lectures given by Offit, including a course taught at the Advanced Institute for Analytic Psychotherapy, and symposia in which she participated, such as the Program for Women's Sexuality. Subseries three consists of a newsletter and lecture series advertisement from Lenox Hill Hospital, where she was on staff. Subseries four includes a piece of blank letterhead, presumably used in her private practice.

Arrangement note

Arranged into four subseries: (1) Awards and honors; (2) Lectures and symposia; (3) Lenox Hill Hospital; and (4) Private practice.

Subseries 1 – Awards and honors

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	18	Phi Beta Kappa Association of New York booklet, 1974
1	19	Who's Who in the East certificate, 16 th edition, 1977-1978
1	20	"Best Health Care in America" article (includes Lenox Hill Hospital's Human Sex Therapy subunit and lists Offit), <i>Harper's Bazaar</i> , September 1978
1	21	Establishment of Avodah K. Offit Award for Excellence in Writing, Hunter College High School (includes correspondence; essay applications; Mother's Day Scholarship Fund listings; and brochure), 2015
1	22	Alumni Association Hunter College Hall of Fame certificate for outstanding achievement, undated

Subseries 2 – Lectures and symposia

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	23	Advanced Institute for Analytic Psychotherapy course brochure with

		listing for Offit's class on sexual disorders, 1973-1974
1	24	Women's Sexuality Symposium program, September 1978
1	25	<i>Vogue's</i> 5 th American Women symposium (transcription), <i>Vogue</i> , June 1981 (2 copies)
1	26	"Sex Is a Three Letter Word" television program for HBO (includes correspondence and TV listings), 1981-1982

Subseries 3 – Lenox Hill Hospital

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	27	"Highlights" newsletter from Lenox Hill Hospital with article, "On Sexual Therapy", September 1974
1	28	Advertisement for "Fifty Plus Expo" from <i>The New York Times</i> (includes listing for a lecture by Offit), April 9, 1997

Subseries 4 – Private practice

Box Folder Contents

1	29	Professional letterhead
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SERIES III – CORRESPONDENCE, 1981-2015

Scope and Content Note

This series contains letters and some emails of a professional nature, mostly regarding Offit's books and television appearances. The majority of the correspondence is with publishers, interviewers, and colleagues.

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	30	Professional correspondence, 1981-2015
2	1	Correspondence regarding <i>Virtual Love</i> (with publisher, interviewers, and writers for their comments), 1993-1995

SERIES IV – WRITING, 1952-2016

Scope and Content Note

This series, the bulk of the collection, contains publications written by Offit, such as magazine articles, items for medical journals, books, and reviews. It also includes citations to Offit's work, quotes, and interviews in other publications; some of these citations refer to her publications while others quote her directly as an expert on psychiatry and sex therapy. In addition, there are some unpublished works of fiction, a manuscript for a memoir, and a copy of *Echo* (Hunter College's student literary magazine) with a story and illustrations by Offit. Finally, there are reviews of her work from various sources.

Arrangement note

Arranged into five subseries alphabetically: (1) Articles; (2) Books; (3) Citations and interviews; (4) Manuscripts and fiction; and (5) Reviews.

Subseries 1 – Articles

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
2	2	Draft of article or talk on pornography, undated
2	3	Articles, 1974-1979 (includes "Group Treatment of Premature Ejaculation" by Offit and others, <i>Archives of Sexual Behavior</i> , vol. 3, #5, September 1974; "Let's Put Love Back into Sex", <i>Newsday</i> , August 21, 1977; and "Sexual Survey #16: Current Thinking on Female Sexuality, <i>Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality</i> , November 1978, among others)
2	4	Articles, 1980-1982 (includes "Sexuality: The Facts of (Later) Life", <i>Ms.</i> , January 1982; "Your Sexual Self" column in <i>Glamour</i> ; and "Report on Fellatio", <i>Cosmopolitan</i> , October 1982, among others)
2	5	Articles, 1983-1984 (includes "Your Sexual Self" column in <i>Glamour</i> ; "Sexual Inhibition and Women", <i>Vogue</i> , March 1983; and "How to Keep the Season from Ruining Your Sex Life", <i>Glamour</i> , December 1984, among others)
2	6	Articles, 1992-1995 (includes "Now It Can Be Told: 22 Sex Questions Answered at Last", <i>Mademoiselle</i> , July 1992; "Paradise Regained!" <i>New Choices</i> , June 1994; and "Are You Ready for Virtual Love? A Psychiatrist Looks at Cybersex", <i>Cosmopolitan</i> , January 1995, among others)

Subseries 2 – Books

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically.

Location note

Books marked “SC” are found in Special Collections

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
SC	-	“Therapy of Sexual Dysfunctions” chapter in <i>Contemporary Marriage: Structure, Dynamics and Therapy</i> , edited by Henry Grunebaum and Jacob Christ, Little, Brown, and Company, 1976 (paperback)
SC	-	<i>The Sexual Self</i> , J. B. Lippincott Co., 1977 (hardcover)
SC	-	<i>Das Sexuelle Ich</i> (German translation of <i>The Sexual Self</i>), Ernst Klett, 1979 (hardcover)
SC	-	<i>Le Moi Sexuel</i> (French translation of <i>The Sexual Self</i>), Flammarion, 1979 (paperback)
SC	-	<i>Night Thoughts: Reflections of a Sex Therapist</i> , unedited manuscript, Congdon & Lattès, 1981 (paperback)
SC	-	<i>Night Thoughts: Reflections of a Sex Therapist</i> , Panther Books, 1981 (paperback)
2	7	“The Psychosexual Dysfunctions: Diagnostic Complexities” chapter in <i>Psychiatry 1982 Annual Review</i> , The American Psychiatric Association, edited by Lester Grinspoon (photocopy)
SC	-	<i>The Sexual Self</i> , revised edition, Congdon & Weed, Inc., 1983 (paperback)
SC	-	<i>Virtual Love</i> , a novel (uncorrected proof), 1994, Simon & Schuster
SC	-	<i>Night Thoughts: Reflections of a Sex Therapist</i> , revised edition, 1995, Jason Aronson, Inc. (paperback)
SC	-	<i>Night Thoughts: Reflections of a Sex Therapist</i> , 1995, Korean edition by ShiYu Shi Publishing (paperback)
SC	-	<i>Night Thoughts: Reflections of a Sex Therapist</i> , 2016, memorial edition, The Beckham Publications Group (paperback) [signed copy]

Subseries 3 – Citations and interviews**Arrangement note**

Arranged chronologically.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
2	8	Citations and interviews, 1972-1979 (includes “Young Believe Drugs Enhance Sex: Survey”, <i>New York Post</i> , August 8, 1972; interview in <i>Intellectual Design</i> , February 1974; and “Why Husbands Don’t Listen, Can’t Remember and Get Mad When You Complain”, <i>Woman’s Day</i> , January 1977, among others)
2	9	Citations and interviews, 1980-1985 (includes “Unfaithful Wives: What Happens to Their Marriages”, <i>McCall’s</i> , June 1980; “Advice from the

		Heart”, <i>Cosmopolitan</i> , May 1982; and “An Intimate Chat with a Sex Therapist”, possibly <i>Cosmopolitan</i> , undated [but probably 1982], among others)
2	10	Citations and interviews, 1990-1998 (includes “Sex at Core of Novel in Cyberspace”, <i>Sunday Record</i> , June 19, 1994; “Therapy on a Virtual Couch”, <i>The New York Times</i> , August 28, 1994; and “Love Bytes”, <i>Women’s Wear Daily</i> , September 2, 1994, among others)
4	-	Oversized interviews including “Profile: Avodah Offit”, <i>Hamptons</i> , July 8, 1994, and “Modern Love”, <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , October 17, 1994

Subseries 4 – Manuscripts and fiction

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
2	11	“Birds of Prey-Drama” story and illustrations by Offit in <i>Echo</i> , circa 1952
2	12	“Enjoy the Lady” manuscript (intended as a novel), circa 1956
2	13	Three short stories (“Strelitzia”, “Semiprivate”, and “To Talk about Love”), circa 1962
3	1	“A Perfect Husband” manuscript (intended as a companion piece to Sidney Offit’s “Aspects of a Marriage”), early 2000s

Subseries 5 – Reviews

Arrangement note

Arranged first by reviews of Offit’s publications, then by reviews written by Offit, and chronologically within each sub-subseries.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
3	2	Reviews for <i>The Sexual Self</i> from <i>The New York Times</i> (May 29, 1977, and December 18, 1983) and <i>Publishers Weekly</i> (May 1977), among others
3	3	Reviews for <i>Night Thoughts</i> from <i>Newsweek</i> (April 29, 1981), <i>Library Journal</i> (May 1, 1981), and <i>The New Republic</i> , October 14, 1981, among others
3	4	Reviews for <i>Virtual Love</i> from <i>The New York Times</i> (April 14, 1994), <i>The Village Voice Literary Supplement</i> (May 1994), and <i>The Southampton Press</i> (July 21, 1994), among others
4	-	Oversized reviews including “Therapist Reflects on World of Sex,” by Harvey Mindess, <i>Atlantic City Press</i> , July 19, 1981, and “The E-Spot:

3	5	Playing Doctor with Avodah Offit”, by Laurie Stone, <i>Voice Literary Supplement: Fiction</i> , May 1994
		Reviews by Offit in <i>Psychology Today</i> (June 1979), <i>The Los Angeles Times</i> (January 3, 1982), and <i>The New York Times</i> (March 16, 1986), among others
4	-	Oversized reviews by Offit in <i>The Book Review</i> (July 12, 1981) and <i>Los Angeles Times</i> (August 22, 1993)

SERIES V – PUBLICITY

Scope and Content Note

This subseries mostly contains magazine and newspaper advertisements for Offit’s books. In addition, there are a few press releases for her column in *Glamour*, a lecture flyer, and lists of interview circuits.

Arrangement note

Arranged chronologically.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
3	6	Book publicity, 1977-1996 (includes ads in <i>The New York Times</i> , May 4, 1994; <i>Psychotherapy Book News</i> , August 3, 1995, and <i>An Authoritative Guide to Books in Psychotherapy</i> , 1996, among others)
3	7	Press releases, lecture flyer, and interview lists from publishers, 1981-1983
4	-	Oversized ads from <i>Psychiatric News</i> (April 16, 1982), for <i>Psychiatry 1982 Annual Review</i> and ad for <i>Virtual Love</i> in <i>The New York Times Book Review</i> (June 26, 1994)