

The Department of Speech and  
Dramatics of Hunter College

1922 - 1960

Finding Aid

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

Accession Number: 1999-06

Size: 0.4522 cu. ft.

Provenance: Department of Speech and Dramatics

Restrictions: None.

Archivist: Prof. Julio L. Hernandez-Delgado

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## HISTORICAL NOTE

The establishment of the Department of Speech and Dramatics evolved from courses on Vocal Expression and Interpretation that were initially offered by the English Department as early as 1910. In 1913, the English Department augmented its courses on speech by adding Mechanics of Voice and Speech, along with Dramatic Interpretation to its curriculum. By 1921, the English major was organized into two divisions. Division I contained courses on literature and composition, while Division II consisted of courses on spoken English. The later section included courses on the Speaking Voice, Phonetics, Oral Compositions, Vocal Expression, Dramatic Interpretation, Parliamentary Procedure and Debating, Stories and Story Telling, etc.

In 1922, Professor Helen Grey Cone, Chair of the English Department, recommended that the Division II courses offered by the department be placed under the jurisdiction of an independent department known as the Department of Speech and Dramatics. The newly established department had a three-fold purpose.

1. To develop in each student their social consciousness and to give them command over their voice, and speech and body that they may be able to fulfill, fearlessly and effectively, their civic and social responsibilities.
2. To teach English Speech so scientifically that Hunter graduates would go out into the city of many dialects and uphold by technical knowledge and personal example "Standard English."
3. To make Hunter College a center for dramatic training and interest.

The Department of Speech and Dramatics remained a viable and integral component of the College from 1922 to 1969. The original mission of the department was to train students to become effective communicators, both in their personal and public lives. In 1964, the department was restructured and renamed the Department of Speech and Theatre. In 1970, the department was dissolved. The speech component of the department was merged with the Communications Department, while the theatre component became part of the Theatre and Film Department.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The documents in this collection shed some light on the impact that the Department of Speech and Dramatics had on Hunter College students. In addition to providing courses on spoken English, we know that said department was also involved with the student productions of Varsity and Make-up Box, and with the Amelia Ottinger Prize Debates which involved students from various colleges.

## **SERIES DESCRIPTION**

### **Series I – Administration**

Series I consist of annual reports and documents on the former Speech Hearing Center.

### **Series II – Staff Files**

Series II consists of documents about former Professor Arthur L. Woehl who was a Grand Marshal of Hunter College, the former Chair of the Speech and Theatre Department, and a member of the Hunter College faculty from 1928 to 1961. Professor Woehl was an expert on the Restoration Theatre and was an author, lecturer, and consultant in the field of Speech and Theatre. He died on March 16, 1967. The records are arranged alphabetically while the documents are sorted chronologically.

## CONTAINER LIST

### SERIES I – ADMINISTRATION

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	1	Annual Reports 1922, 1927, 1929, 1931
	2	1941, 1943, 1953, 1955 - 1960
	3	Speech and Hearing Center, (date)

### SERIES II – STAFF FILES

1	4	Woehl, Arthur L. Biographical Information
		Correspondence
	5	Incoming, (dates)
	6	Outgoing, (dates)
	7	Miscellaneous Materials
	8	Programs, (dates)
		Staff Personnel Records
	9	1939, 1941, 1949 - 1955, 1957 - 1960
		Statement
	10	The Function of the Department of Speech and Dramatics, December 16, 1939