

**University of Illinois at Chicago, Special
Collections and University Archives
at the Library of the Health Sciences
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December 20, 2013

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

University of Illinois at Chicago, Special Collections and
University Archives at the Library of the Health Sciences
November 22, 2013

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Illinois at Chicago, Special Collections and University Archives at the Library of the Health Sciences
Title	National Organization for Women, Chicago Chapter Records
Date [inclusive]	1964-2012
Extent	130.68 Linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The National Organization of Women (NOW) was founded in 1966 and the Chicago Chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) was organized two years later, in 1968. By working with business leaders, politicians, and social organizers Chicago NOW focused on creating jobs, equal wages, and legislation for workplace safety for women and other marginalized groups. The National Organization for Women, Chicago Chapter Records document the administrative and programmatic history of the organization. Records reflect Chicago chapter, Illinois regional branch, and the national level organizational structure and administrative functions, with a particular focus on the Chicago chapter's activities. The collection is divided into nine series, "Papers of NOW Officers," "Chicago Chapter Administrative Records," "Illinois NOW Records," "National NOW Records," "Conventions and Conferences," "Campaigns," "Organizational Partnerships," "Feminist and Related Publications," and "Ephemera."</p>

Historical Note

The National Organization of Women (NOW) was founded in 1966 by a group of women attending the Third National Conference of the Commission on the Status of Women; which was centered on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The women, Betty Friedan, Pauli Murray, Gene Boyer, Kathryn Clarenbach, Mary Eastwood, Dorothy Haener, Anna Roosevelt Halsted, Esther Johnson, Inka O'Hanrahan, and Caroline Ware, were acutely interested in ensuring that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), was proactively followed. Determined to see that the theme of the Conference was put in to practice, Betty Friedan and the other participants discussed other avenues to bring about equality for women. It was through these discussions that the National Organization for Women was founded with the committed to "take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American Society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men."

The Chicago Chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) was organized in 1968. The Chicago chapter was founded in conjunction with the inaugural effort to require men's social and dining clubs to follow the non-discriminatory policy of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This early effort to bring attention to the pervasive discrimination against women in Chicago set the stage for the organization's involvement in bringing social and economic inequalities of women to the forefront of the political agenda. By working with business leaders, politicians, and social organizers Chicago NOW focused on creating jobs, equal wages, and legislation for workplace safety. In keeping with the tenants of the national umbrella organization, the Chicago chapter also worked to support national and international efforts to bring broad changes to women's general and reproductive health, repressive social and political environments, and legal rights for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Scope and Contents note

The National Organization for Women, Chicago Chapter Records document the administrative and programmatic history of the organization. Records reflect Chicago chapter, Illinois regional branch, and the national level organizational structure and administrative functions; with a particular focus on the Chicago chapters activities and involvement in local, state and national level programs, demonstrations, and events. The collection is particularly rich in correspondence, administrative records, and documentation regarding the memberships involvement in demonstrations and political action for equal education, employment, childcare, reproductive and health rights, and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The collection is divided into nine series:

Series I. Papers of NOW Officers Series II. Chicago Chapter Administrative Records Series III. Illinois NOW Records Series IV. National NOW Records Series V. Conventions and Conferences Series VI.

Campaigns Series VII. Organizational Partnerships Series VIII. Feminist and Related Publications Series IX. Ephemera

Administrative Information

Publication Information

University of Illinois at Chicago, Special Collections and University Archives at the Library of the Health Sciences November 22, 2013

Restrictions

Some material is restricted for privacy reasons. Please contact the archivist for further information.

Processing Information note

Processed by CLIR funded Black Metropolis Research Consortium "Color Curtain Processing Project" by Lisa Calahan, Beth Loch, Emily Minehart, Ben Peterson, Olle Larson, Katie Obriot, Mooni Abdus-Salam. November 22, 2013.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Records of the National Organization for Women, The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliff Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University National Organization for Women, West Suburban Chapter Records, University of Illinois at Chicago, Special Collections and University Archives at the Library of the Health Sciences

Controlled Access Headings

Personal Name(s)

- Collins-Robson, Mary Jean
- Friedan, Betty

Subject(s)

- Abortion
- Abortion--United States.
- Chicago Irish Feminists
- Economic equality
- Equal Rights Amendment
- Labor Unions
- Legal Defense and Education Fund
- Lesbian rights
- Military service of women
- National Organization for Women, Chicago Chapter
- Reproductive Rights
- Sex discrimination
- Sex-segregated advertising
- Violence against women
- Women Employed

Cited Sources

Chicagonow.org. About. <http://chicagonow.org/about-2/> Accessed 10/25/2013.

Series I. Papers of NOW Officers,**Collection Inventory****Series I. Papers of NOW Officers, 1964-2012****Scope and Contents note**

This series includes the papers collected and created by NOW leadership officers during their time holding leadership positions. This series includes the papers of the following women: Mary Jean Collins-Robson, Bette Vidina, Wilma “Willie” Stevens, and Susan Straus. Material includes correspondence between other NOW leadership personnel, memorandum on national, regional and local issues; as well as national and local board of directors and task force correspondence. These records also include prepared and draft speeches, meeting minutes, subject files, handwritten notes, position papers, reports regarding “women’s issues” and corresponding Organizational issues, financial records, organizational reports to and from the Board of Directors, and NOW or related publications.

Box

Mary Jean Collins Robson, 1964-1977

1-12

Bette Vidina, 1969-1981

13-23

Wilma “Willy” Stevens, 1969-1977

24-27

Susan Straus, 2006-2012

28-33

Series II. Chicago Chapter Administrative Records, 1966-2009**Scope and Contents note**

Series II. Chicago Chapter Administrative Records,

This series includes documents that reflect the workings of Chicago NOW as an organization, it also reflects its relationship under the National NOW umbrella. The series includes several groupings of documents that document the daily activities of the chapter and are described below:

Correspondence: Primarily administrative correspondence between officers, national headquarters, local organizations. Correspondence also includes both hate and support mail.

Board of Directors: Consists of reports and correspondence, documentation on the internal elections of both National and Chicago Presidents and other leadership; includes the papers of NOW Officer and Board member Ann Ladky.

Elections: Documents NOW efforts to provide canvassing and election support for United States presidential elections, political propaganda related to campaigns and candidates and includes correspondence, primary and election day results for Cook County. This material also includes some documentation related to National and Chicago branch leadership elections such as correspondence, press releases, memorandum, and campaign literature.

Meetings and Minutes: Includes agendas, memorandum, and minutes from staff, task force, committee, and event planning meetings.

Public Relations: Includes the files of the Speakers Bureau and Public Relations department, news clippings that mention NOW, women's related issues in Chicago, as well as interviews and biographical information on NOW members and leadership.

History: Includes material of historical significance such as original memoranda from Betty Friedan, founding charters, bi-laws, and correspondence regarding the start of the Chicago Chapter in 1968. It also includes early meeting minutes, by-laws, handwritten notes, and notes and essays related to a project related to documenting the history of the Chicago NOW Chapter.

Financial: Includes documentation on fundraising events, annual budgets, and special projects budgets.

Personnel files: Includes resumes and files on the staff and leadership of Chicago NOW.

Membership: Documents created and collected by Bette Vidina, Chicago NOW Membership Coordinator. Records pertain to membership recruitment, retention, mailings, and event attendance.

Political Action: Reflects the political role NOW Chicago held in Chicago by documenting participation in local political events and demonstrations.

Series II. Chicago Chapter Administrative Records,

Publications: ACT NOW was the Chicago branch's monthly newsletter. These records reflect the activities of the local and national level organization, campaigns, and women's issues. The newsletters include original layouts, drafts, galley proofs, and published copies.

Events/Fundraisers: Includes documentation about special events, programs, and fundraisers. Includes announcements, attendance lists, programs, and correspondence.

Photographs: Includes photographs of events and programs.

Audio/Visual: Includes cassette tapes, LP recordings, reel-to-reel sound and audio, and VHS video of the Chicago chapter's participation in events, programs, parades, and demonstrations.

Topical Files: Includes articles and news clippings about topics related to women's equal rights, social, welfare, and health issues.

Box

Correspondence, 1971-1988

34-37

Board of Directors, Ann Ladky, 1970-1983

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Board of Directors, 1969-1993

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Photographs, 1966-2003	121-128
Audio Visual, 1973-2000	129-130
Topical Files 1970-1996	131-136

Series III. Illinois NOW Records, 1972-1990**Scope and Contents note**

This series includes documentation on the State level organization of NOW. A significant portion of these documents reflects NOW involvement in the attempt to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The ERA Central files include documentation regarding the Equal Rights Amendment lobbying and voter registration outreach for the State of Illinois. The Central files include documentation on various programs related to state and local branches of NOW working to pass the Equal Rights Amendment in 1976, as well as subsequent attempts, at the State Legislature in Springfield Illinois. ERA Central was responsible for overseeing the enforcement and support of ERA in the Midwest and was used as a model in other NOW regions. This series also includes administrative correspondence, other political action events and initiatives, as well as reports from the other NOW branches in Illinois.

Series IV. National NOW Records,

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ERA Central, 1972-1984	137-141
Administrative, 1980-1987	142
Political Action, 1980-1987	143-145
Reports, 1980-1990	146

Series IV. National NOW Records, 1970-circa 1998**Scope and Contents note**

The National NOW records reflect correspondence and documentation regarding the workings of the organization at the national level. It is clear that some files were created and used by Chicago NOW presidents and other leadership. A significant amount of material is related to NOW national level task forces, which focused on women's political, health, and equality issues. The documents include correspondence, reports memos, and Task Force files related to specific campaigns. Of note in this series is Mary Jean Collins-Robson's role as Coordinator of the National Task Forces.

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Chapter Reports, circa 1970-1980	151
NOW Publications, circa 1970-1998	152-153

Series V. Conventions and Conferences,**Series V. Conventions and Conferences, 1972-1991****Scope and Contents note**

This series contains documentation regarding the yearly NOW national convention as well as other conferences and workshops attended by Chicago NOW officers and staff. Some files include documentation regarding the planning and implementation of events and include correspondence with speakers, venue receipts and contracts, brochures and/or published programs, expense reports, and receipts.

Box

Conventions and Conferences, 1972-1991

154-160

Series VI. Campaigns, circa 1968-1998**Scope and Contents note**

Campaigns include press releases, clippings, memorandum, correspondence, meeting minutes and memos, and publications related to women's issues. In some cases, the files are extremely detailed and may outline specific legal discrimination cases, complaints, business profiles, and corresponding rallies or demonstrations. Files may also include some Task Force and NOW leadership material when related to a specific cause or event. Of particular interest are the Chicago NOW activities related to equal public accommodation following the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Box

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Series VII. Organizational Partnerships, 1974-1985**Scope and Contents note**

Organizational Partnerships consists of documentation about the organization Women Employed. Ann Ladky, Chicago NOW Board Member, was a founding member of Women Employed and was named Director in 1985. The records here reflect her early involvement with Women Employed and

Series VIII. Feminist and Related Publications,

the working partnership between Chicago NOW and Women Employed. This series also includes documentation about partnerships with other local organizations such as Illinois Commission on the State of Women, and Illinois Women's Agenda.

Box

Organizational Partnerships, 1974-1985

255-257

Series VIII. Feminist and Related Publications, 1967-1997**Scope and Contents note**

The publications found in this series were collected by NOW officers and staff members that related to women's welfare and social issues. Some of the publications found here are rare with short print runs. Documents include magazines, zines, news clippings, and individual articles. Of note are documents related to Spokeswoman Magazine, which includes research files, drafts, some correspondence regarding publications.

Box

Feminist and Related Publications, 1967-1997

258-278

Series IX. Ephemera, 1975-1998**Scope and Contents note**

Ephemera include objects collected or produced by Chicago NOW during campaign demonstrations, parades, marches, and political campaigns. Material in this series includes banners, buttons, stickers, posters, t-shirts, coffee mugs, etc.

Box

Ephemera, 1975-1998

279-307