Identity Statement

Reference Code: GB0559/MS83
Title: Sam Black Papers
Dates: 1923-1999
Level of Description: Fonds
Extent: 8 linear metres (14 boxes)

Context

Name of Creator: Sam Black

Biographical History:

Sam Black (1915-1999), Professor of Public Relations at Stirling and Exeter Universities, was born in London in 1915. He qualified and practiced as an ophthalmic optician between 1935-55 and was active in campaigning and publishing for the Association of Optical Practitioners (AOP), but is best known for his long and distinguished Public Relations career. Along with US contemporary Edward Bernays, Sam Black is recognised as one of the founding fathers of Public Relations internationally and as a key thinker and contributor to the development of PR as an ethical and rigorous management science discipline in the UK, with an established place on the University curriculum.

He was instrumental in the establishment of the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) in the UK in 1948 and in its adoption of a professional code of ethics for members, initially drafting a code in 1950 which eventually came into force in 1963. He was also an active campaigner in the achievement of chartered status for the IPR, guarding against misuse of the term “public relations practitioner” by publicists and organised the IPR’s 25th anniversary conference in 1972, for which he received the IPR 1972 President’s medal.

He was also instrumental in the development of an international code of ethics for practitioners (the Code of Athens) which was adopted in 1968, and was an active member of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), holding posts of Secretary General 1977-80 and President, 1982. An active writer and speaker on his subject, Black lectured extensively around the world and wrote over a dozen books on Public Relations matters (translated into several languages) alongside numerous articles appearing in a variety of publications worldwide. He also edited numerous academic journals and other publications including Public Relations (1952-55), IPRA Review (1977-85) and The Journal of the Society of Environmental Engineers (1971).

Black enjoyed a long association with British industry and trade associations including the Board of Trade and British Overseas Trade Board. He contributed to the Board of Trade initiative to encourage British companies to exhibit overseas by organising over 100 overseas exhibitions for the Board, for which he was awarded an MBE for his services to export in 1969. Through his company, The Sam Black Organisation Ltd, he went on to organise over 260 overseas exhibitions for engineering, electrical and other sectors of British industry. He began a series of British Engineering Weeks in 1965 which were later incorporated into the British Overseas Trade Board programme in 1973. From 1965-72, he worked as PR adviser to the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, servicing their exhibition, conference, publication, design and PR needs.

Black campaigned from the early 1980s for the introduction of public relations as a management discipline in Universities, succeeding in 1988 with the establishment of the first PR Masters programme in Europe at the University of Stirling. He was appointed Honorary
Professor at the Universities of Stirling, Exeter and Xian in China. Black received a lifetime achievement award from the IPR in 1998 as well as awards from various institutions and association including the University of Florida, European Public Relations Confederation and PR Societies of America, Nigeria and Arab states for his contribution to PR education and research. Black maintained links with the Association of Optical Practitioners throughout his career and edited the AOP newsletter and the association’s journal Vision from 1947-55.

Immediate Source of Acquisition:

Main body of papers donated by Sam Black, 17 December 1998. Subsequent donation of small amount of additional papers by daughter Patricia Hamilton, 07 October 2002.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Scope and Content:


Appraisal/Destruction/Scheduling:

All Sam Black papers transferred have been preserved.

Accruals:

It is understood that further Sam Black papers still in the posession of the family may be transferred to the library in the future.

System of Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into 5 series reflecting either the form of the records or the activities to which they relate as follows:

Series 1 (SB1): Papers relating to Sam Black’s PR Career (1936-1999)
Series 3 (SB3): Papers relating to Dr Edward L Bernays (1923-1998)
Series 5 (SB5): Artefacts awarded or gifted to Black (1965-1992)

CONDITIONS OF ACCESS AND USE

Conditions Governing Access:

No special conditions. Please contact the Special Collections department regarding access arrangements.

Conditions Governing Reproduction:

Please contact the Special Collections department regarding reproduction conditions and charges.

Language:

Mainly English, with some material in French, Spanish and Chinese.
Physical Characteristics:

Some documents printed on thermal fax paper are faded and partly illegible.

Finding Aids:

Series level descriptions with associated file level descriptive lists where available.

ALLIED MATERIALS

Related Units of Description:

The papers of Dr Edward L Bernays are held by the Library of Congress (MSS12534) and include Bernay's correspondence with Sam Black.

NOTES

Archivist's Note:

Description prepared by D. Cloy, September 2005.

Rules and Conventions:

Fonds and series level descriptions based on ISAD(G) 2nd ed.