

Rockefeller University Archives
Record Group 450 W184
Hao Wang Papers

Scope and Content

Size

Approximately 60 cubic feet (169 boxes).

Restrictions

None.

Dates

The collection contains materials ranging from the 1940s to the 1990s.

Biographical Note

Hao Wang was born on May 20, 1921 in Jinan (Tsinan) in what is today the People's Republic of China. Wang grew up in China, and received his Bachelor's degree in Mathematics from the National Southwestern Associated University in 1943, and his Master's degree in Philosophy from Tsing Hua University in 1945.

Wang moved to the United States, and in 1948, he received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Harvard University. He remained at Harvard as a Junior Fellow of the Society of Fellows (from 1948 to 1951) and was subsequently appointed as Assistant Professor of Philosophy.

In 1954, Wang travelled to England, where he served as John Locke Lecturer and as Reader in the Philosophy of Mathematics (1956-1961) at Oxford University. Upon reentry into the United States, Wang returned to Harvard as Gordon McKay Professor of Mathematical Logic and Applied Mathematics. During his tenure at Harvard, Wang also collaborated with the Burroughs Corporation, the University of Michigan, the International Business Machine Corporation (IBM), Bell Laboratories, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

In 1967, Wang joined the faculty of the Rockefeller University, a position he would hold until his death in 1995. Although the Logic Research Group was disbanded in 1976, Wang remained at the University, continuing his research and work in mathematics, logic, and philosophy. Wang's early research was in computer science, artificial intelligence and automated theorem proving, and in the 1960s, he introduced domino problems ("Wang tiles"). Later in his career, Wang focused his attention on the life and writings of the mathematician-philosopher Kurt Gödel. Prior to his death in 1978, Gödel allowed Wang to have many in-depth discussions with him; one product of these conversations was Wang's 1987 book Reflections on Kurt Gödel.

Wang was a member of the Association of Symbolic Logic and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was named Honorary Professor at both Peking University (1985) and Tsing Hua University (1986). In addition to numerous articles, Wang authored Logic, Computers and Sets (1962), From Mathematics to Philosophy (1974), Popular Lectures on Mathematical Logic (1981), Beyond Analytical Philosophy: Doing Justice to What We Know (1985), and A Logical Journey: From Gödel to Philosophy (1996). In 1983, Wang was awarded the first Milestone Prize for Automated Theorem Proving.

Hao Wang died of lymphoma at the age of 73 on May 13, 1995.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into six distinct series based on subject matter and media:

- Series 1 Biographical Materials
- Series 2 Office Files
- Series 3 Manuscripts, Notes, and Notebooks
- Series 4 Reprints
- Series 5 Materials in Chinese
- Series 6 Audio-Visual and Miscellaneous Materials

Series Descriptions

Series 1, Biographical Materials, is arranged alphabetically, and includes information on Wang's personal and academic life, including bibliographies, vita, biographical essays, and family correspondence.

Series 2, Office Files, is arranged alphabetically and is a hybrid of correspondence, subject files, and manuscripts (typically those authored by others).

Series 3, Manuscripts, Notes, and Notebooks, is the largest series of material, and is also arranged alphabetically. This series consists of Wang's notes, various drafts of manuscripts written by Wang (either for an article or book), as well as a set of research notebooks kept by Wang.

Series 4, Reprints, is arranged alphabetically by reprint title; nearly all reprints are authored by Wang.

Series 5, Materials in Chinese, is arranged alphabetically by English folder titles, and consists of files whose contents were almost or entirely in Chinese. Folders in this series include manuscripts, notes, and correspondence.

Series 6, Audio-Visual and Miscellaneous Materials, includes three folders of photographs, one cassette tape, and two sets of a reprint index card catalog kept by Wang.

Associated Material

For related material on Wang's work, the researcher may wish to consult the following books in the Rockefeller Archive Center library:

- [Logic, Computers and Sets](#)
- [From Mathematics to Philosophy](#)
- [Beyond Analytic Philosophy: Doing Justice to What We Know](#)
- [Reflections on Kurt Gödel](#)
- [A Logical Journey: From Gödel to Philosophy](#)

Using the Finding Aid

Researchers will note that many folder titles in this collection are enclosed in square brackets. These brackets indicate that the folder title listed in the finding aid was created by

the processing archivist, and was not original to the file itself. Folder titles have been imposed for materials that were received loose or in unlabeled folders.

Additionally, some folders are marked **[CLOSED]**, indicating that the material in this folder is restricted and is unable to be viewed by researchers, as the file contains sensitive information.

Bethany J. Antos
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