Richard H. Fleming papers, 1924-1989

Overview of the Collection

**Creator** Fleming, Richard H. (Richard Howell), 1909-1989

**Title** Richard H. Fleming papers

**Dates** 1924-1989 (inclusive)
1924 1989
1941-1968 (bulk)
1941 1968

**Quantity** 17.59 cubic feet (18 boxes)

**Collection Number** 4110 (Accession No. 4110-002)

**Summary** Papers of an oceanographer who taught at the University of Washington and engaged in major research projects, such as the first comprehensive synoptic survey of the Northern Pacific Ocean.

**Repository** University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections

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**Access Restrictions** The papers are open to all users.

**Languages** English

**Sponsor** Funding for encoding this finding aid was partially provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Richard H. Fleming (1909-1989) was an oceanographer and chaired the University of Washington Oceanography Department from 1951 to 1967. He was born in Victoria, British Columbia, and attended the University of British Columbia, where he received his B.A. and an M.A. in chemistry. Afterward he pursued studies at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography of the University of California, receiving his Ph.D. in oceanography in 1935. Fleming taught at the Scripps Institution for several years and also worked for the Division of War Research of the University of California from 1941 to 1946, applying the study of oceanography to problems of undersea warfare. He continued his work in the military applications of oceanography as the chief oceanographer for the U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office in Washington, D.C. from 1946 to 1951. Dr. Fleming joined the faculty of the University of Washington in 1951 as the chairman of the Oceanography Department. He directed the expansion of the department's programs, including the development of undergraduate studies in oceanography.

Dr. Fleming also engaged in research during his time as chairman and participated in major projects at sea. The NORPAC (Northern Pacific Survey) project (1955-1956) was the first comprehensive synoptic survey of the Northern Pacific Ocean, charting currents, tides, winds, depths, and temperatures and observing plant and animal life over a two year period. Project Chariot (1959-1962), conducted for the
Atomic Energy Commission as part of Operation Plowshare, investigated the possibility of creating a harbor in Alaska by exploding nuclear devices. Dr. Fleming’s career coincided with the beginning of the nuclear age, and his work included two studies on the disposal of atomic wastes in the ocean, the first for the National Bureau of Standards and the second for the National Research Council.

Fleming belonged to numerous scientific organizations and worked on many committees. These included an organizing committee of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics and several committees of the National Research Council. He engaged in and supervised research on grant projects sponsored by the Office of Naval Research, the Atomic Energy Commission, and the National Science Foundation.

Fleming served as chairman of the Department of Oceanography until 1967 and continued as a professor of oceanography until 1980, when he retired as professor emeritus. He was particularly interested in the development of education in oceanography and worked with committees to promote the training of secondary school teachers and the publication of textbooks in the field. He was the author, with Harold Sverdrup, of The Oceans, one of the standard works on oceanography. Fleming was also a Fulbright lecturer at the University of Istanbul in Turkey from 1964 to 1965.

Content Description

Primarily relating to his career as an oceanographer and professor, the Richard H. Fleming papers include correspondence, speeches and writings, reports, cruise data and reports, research project files, curriculum materials, bibliographies, bibliographic cards, notebooks, notes, oceanographic charts, ephemera, legislation, photographs, minutes, and budgets, 1924-1989 (bulk 1941-1968).

Project files include his work for NORPAC and Project Chariot. The papers from Project Chariot include reports distributed to all the participants in the project. These provide details on many aspects of the project in addition to the oceanographic work of Fleming and others. Fleming’s research work in Project Chariot is arranged in subseries of Cruise Reports and Cruise Data following the general series of Project Chariot reports.

Fleming’s work as chairman of the University of Washington Oceanography Department is represented in both his general correspondence and in the series for the department. While the papers include those from throughout his career, the bulk correspond to his tenure as department chairman from 1951 to 1967. The papers from Dr. Fleming’s work on scientific and other committees are arranged under the respective series.

Many of Fleming’s writings are included in the papers in draft form. Handwritten drafts in both the Writings subseries and the Project Chariot Cruise Reports include some prepared by Fleming’s co-author, Diane Heggerty, in particular the “Drift Bottle Report” and the report on the oceanography of the southeastern Chukchi Sea. Some of the papers that were organized in notebooks or binders have been retained in this format. In addition there are some bound volumes of project reports and conference proceedings.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

The creator’s literary rights have been transferred to the University of Washington Libraries.
Administrative Information

Arrangement

Arranged into 3 series:

- Personal and professional papers, 1924-1989
- Scientific and educational organizations, 1930-1968
- University of Washington committees and departmental records, 1932-1980

Acquisition Information


Processing Note

The Richard H. Fleming papers include the papers from two accessions which have been merged. The papers from Accession No. 4110-89-45 had been stored on an oceanography barge. The papers constituting Accession No. 4114-90-15 were kept in the Fleming home.

Publications and duplicates included with the papers were removed during processing in 1996.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Personal and Professional Papers, 1924-1989

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**National Research Council, Biological Effects of Atomic Radiation Committee, Effects of Radiation on Oceanography and Fisheries Committee**

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**National Science Foundation**

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Richard H. Fleming papers, 1924-1989  
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv52002
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**University of Washington Committees and Departmental Papers, 1932-1980**

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Richard H. Fleming papers, 1924-1989
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv52002
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Richard H. Fleming papers, 1924-1989
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv52002
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Names and Subjects

Subject Terms:
College teachers--Washington (State)--Seattle--Archives
Departmental chairmen (Universities)--Washington (State)--Seattle--Archives
Military oceanography--United States
Nuclear energy--Industrial applications--Alaska
Oceanographers--Washington (State)--Seattle--Archives
Oceanography--Charts, diagrams, etc
Oceanography--North Pacific Ocean--Observations
Oceanography--Research--Chukchi Sea
Oceanography--Research--North Pacific Ocean
Oceanography--Research--United States
Oceanography--Societies, etc
Oceanography--Study and teaching (Higher)--Washington (State)--Seattle
Radioactive waste disposal in the ocean

Personal Names:
Fleming, Richard H. (Richard Howell), 1909-1989--Archives

Corporate Names:
American Society of Limnology and Oceanography
Council on Wave Research
International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics
National Research Council (U.S.)
National Research Council (U.S.). Committee on Oceanography
National Science Foundation (U.S.)
Project Chariot
Project Norpac
Southern Regional Education Board
United States. Hydrographic Office
United States. Office of Naval Research
University of Washington. Dept. of Oceanography
University of Washington. Graduate School
University of Washington--Faculty--Archives

Form or Genre Terms:
bibliographies
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Clippings (Books, newspapers, etc.)
conferences
correspondence
curricula
ephemera
logs (records)
marine charts
minutes
Newsletters
notes
Photographs
project files
proposals
reports
research (document genres)
technical reports
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