

Damon Knight papers, 1912-2002

Overview of the Collection

Aut	Knight, Damon, 1922-2002
Title	Damon Knight papers
Dates	1912-2002 (inclusive) 1912 2002 1940-2002 (bulk) 1940 2002
Quantity	76.5 linear feet, (55 containers) : 38 record storage boxes, 14 flat manuscript boxes, 3 manuscript boxes
Collection Number	Coll 340
Summary	Damon Francis Knight (1922-2002) was a well-known editor, author, and critic in the field of science fiction. He was instrumental in establishing the Milford writers' conference and the Clarion writers' workshops. His book on creative writing, first published in 1981 is still in print. But, he also wrote puns, poems, television and radio scripts, western and detective fiction, biographical and autobiographical works, and an analysis of the artwork of Hieronymus Bosch. The collection contains personal and business correspondence, manuscripts, documents, photos and memorabilia dating from Damon Knight's grandparents' era, the Spanish American war, to his death in 2002.
Repository	University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives. UO Libraries--SCUA 1299 University of Oregon Eugene OR 97403-1299 Telephone: 541-346-3068 spcarref@uoregon.edu
Access Restrictions	Collection is open to the public. Collection must be used in Special Collections and University Archives Reading Room. Collection or parts of collection may be stored offsite. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives in advance of your visit to allow for transportation time.
Additional Reference Guides	See the Current Collection Guide for detailed description and requesting options.
Languages	English

Historical Note

Damon Francis Knight (1922-2002) was born in Baker City, Oregon. His family moved to Hood River where Damon attended grade school and high school. Both of his parents, Frederick and Leola Knight, were teachers. His father later became the high school principal and ran a printing press. Damon

became a science fiction fan at an early age and received his first check on December 15th, 1939 for the publication of a cartoon drawing in the science fiction magazine *Amazing Stories*. Upon graduating from high school in 1940, Damon spent a year at the WPA Art Center in Salem. There he published two issues of a fanzine, "Snide", which included a story by Ray Bradbury. By this time he was in correspondence with the group of struggling writers and science fiction fans in New York who became known as "The Futurians". With their encouragement, he joined them, eking out a living with some financial help from his parents. His early literary jobs included proofing and copy-editing for "Popular Publications", then writing comments for aspiring authors' stories for Meredith, followed by a stint at Hillman Publications. Interspersed were publications of occasional short stories and book reviews. In 1955, Knight moved to Milford, Pennsylvania with his second wife Helen. Along with James Blish, Knight set up the Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference in 1956. That was also the year he won the Hugo Award for "In Search of Wonder. Knight founded the Science Fiction Writers of America in 1965; its annual Nebula Award has become one of the most prestigious awards for science fiction.

Knight published about 17 novels and edited over 30 individual anthologies, in addition to 21 volumes of the *Orbit* anthology, from 1966-1980. The *Orbit* anthology helped launch the careers of many new writers, including Gene Wolfe, RA Lafferty, and Knight's third wife, Kate Wilhelm, whom he married in 1963.

Knight and Kate Wilhelm were involved in establishing the Clarion Writers Workshops in 1968. They continued teaching there until 1996. Damon's last publication (2000) was the online art history work "Will the Real Hieronymus Bosch Please Stand Up."

Damon Knight died in Eugene, Oregon on April 15, 2002 at the age of 79. In 2003, he was inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame.

Content Description

The collection contains personal and business correspondence, manuscripts, documents, photos and memorabilia dating from Damon Knight's grandparents' era, the Spanish American war, to his death in 2002.

The correspondence between his paternal grandmother and his father offers a picture of life in the Forest Grove area of Oregon between 1901 and 1916. There are letters and photographs of his father's service as a high school teacher in the Philippines in 1912-1913; photographs of trips to the Oregon Coast and also to the Fort Rock area of eastern Oregon with his family during the 1920's. There is correspondence between Damon and each of his parents from the time he left home in 1940 until the death of his father in 1945 and mother in 1948.

The papers include early handwritten Damon Knight stories and sketches. His drafts of manuscripts are peppered with his drawings and illustrations of background material for his stories – giving them a coherence physically, socially, and scientifically even when the material wasn't written up as part of the story.

The correspondence associated with the *Orbit* series and the Clarion workshops shows Damon Knight's efforts as a teacher of writers: how to write, where to submit a story type, the importance of a contract and how to negotiate and retain rights to stories. His letters of rejection to authors usually suggested how to change the story to make it acceptable and/or where it might be submitted for more likely acceptance. Letters show that many of these people did make changes or write new stories incorporating his suggestions and were eventually successful in having him include their stories in the *Orbit* series or other collections. Many of them have become very successful writers.

There are many letters in the Orbit correspondence containing material of personal interest. Among them: Gene Wolfe, Vonda McIntyre, Gardner Dozois, James Sallis, Norman Spinrad, Kim Stanley Robinson, James Tiptree (aka Alice Sheldon), Joanna Russ, George Alec Effinger.

Administrative Information

Detailed Description of the Collection

Description

[Guide to the Damon Knight papers](#)

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

American literature--20th century
Authors, American--20th century
Authors, American--20th century--Correspondence
Authors, American--20th century--Manuscripts
Authors, American--Oregon
Science fiction
Science fiction, American--Authorship

Personal Names :

Wilhelm, Kate

Form or Genre Terms :

Correspondence
Manuscripts for publication
Photographs

Other Creators :

Personal Names :

Knight, Damon, 1922-2002
(aut)

Joyce Griffith and Stephanie Kays
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