

**The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries,  
Union Theological Seminary, New York**

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 1

Finding Aid for

**Africa General Records, 1903 – 1972**



Drum. Credit to: MRL1: Africa General Records, box 6,  
The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries, at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

Finding Aid prepared by: Brigette C. Kamsler, December 2014  
With financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation

**Summary Information**

Creator: Missionary Research Library  
Title: Africa General Records  
Dates: 1903-1972  
Abstract: Collections pertaining to committees, conferences, education, churches, Christianity, religion, missions, missionaries, and other subjects and topics in Africa. Collection contains reports, minutes, papers, photographs, and a drum.  
Size: 9 boxes, 4.25 linear feet  
Storage: Onsite storage  
Repository: The Burke Library  
Union Theological Seminary  
3041 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027  
Email: [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu)

### Administrative Information

- Provenance:** Originally part of the independent Missionary Research Library, these records were moved with the MRL to the Brown Memorial Tower of Union Theological Seminary in 1929. In 1976 the records were accessioned to the Burke Library archives with the closure of the MRL.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to [burkearchives@library.columbia.edu](mailto:burkearchives@library.columbia.edu), or by postal mail to The Burke Library address on page 1, as far in advance as possible. Burke Library staff is available for inquiries or to request a consultation on archival or special collections research.
- Access Restrictions:** The collection is unrestricted to readers. Certain materials, however, are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, MRL1: Africa General Records, box #, The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries, at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

### History

The Missionary Research Library was created by John R. Mott in 1914 after the World Missionary Conference, held in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910. It was created in order to be not only a resource for missionaries, but a means to document the missionary movement. With funding from John D. Rockefeller, Mott stated,

“We are now ready to...secure the most complete and serviceable missionary library and archives in the world. I desire it to be thoroughly interdenominational, ecumenical and international. It should be made preeminently rich in source material.”

It was located at the Madison Avenue headquarters of the Foreign Missionary Conference of North America. By the 1920s, funding was becoming scarcer; therefore it was moved to the Brown Tower of the Union Theological Seminary, New York City in 1929.

The Library was an important center of information and research. Active missionaries would consult the material of the Missionary Research Library while on furlough. Much of the Library's success was due to the director and librarian, Charles H. Fahs. Upon his retirement in 1948, the MRL's financial difficulties continued until it was finally integrated as one with the Burke Library's collections in 1967. In 2004, the Burke Library was fully integrated with the Columbia University Library System.

### Sources:

- Anderson, Gerald H. “To The Ends of the Earth: American Protestants in Pursuit of Mission.” *A Century of Church History: The Legacy of Philip Schaff*, edited by Henry W. Bowden, 168-215. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988.
- Anderson, Gerald H. “Research Libraries in New York City Specializing in Christian Missions.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Aug. 1966), 733-736.

Frame, Cynthia. "Missionary Research Library Collection: From Idea to Special Collection," *Union News*, Summer 1998.

Price, Frank W. "Specialized Research Libraries in Missions." *Library Trends* 9 (2) 1960: Current Trends in Theological Libraries: 175-185.

### **Collection Scope and Content Note**

The Missionary Research Library created and collected many individual items to document a specific topic. This is one such collection, which focuses on Africa. The items were pulled from unknown locations and have no relationship to one another other than they contain information that is generally related.

The collection is grouped by the topic the material covers. The topics are missions and missionaries; Christianity, churches and religion; committees and conferences; education; three-dimensional objects and photographs; and subject files.

### **Processing**

Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. The collection was organized following the "More Product, Less Process" method. This means that the collection was generally organized, but not taken to the folder level of description. The clips and staples were also left in the folders. This allows the collection to be made available more quickly and gives researchers a general idea of what is available in the collection.

### **Further Sources**

The Burke Library Archives offers other collections related to Africa. For more information, please [see the website](#).

**Contents list**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Contents</b>
	<b>Committees and Conferences</b>
1	Joint Study Committee on Broadcasting Opportunities in Africa; International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa; International Conference on African Children; Africa Committee; 1931-1960
	<b>Education</b>
2	Mass Education; Theological Education; Moravian Schools of Surinam; Theological Education Fund; 1928-1972
	<b>Christianity, Religion, and the Church</b>
3	Training of Native Ministry; Methodist Church of Nigeria; Christian Council of South Africa; Evaluation of the Church; 1940-1966
	<b>Missions</b>
4	Egypt Missions and Government; African Methodist Episcopal; Mission to Congo; Basel Mission; 1920-1942
5	Congo Mission; Missions Protestantes du Congo Belge; German Missions; United Christian Missionary Society; Algerian Mission; 1904-1952
	<b>Photographs, Albums and Objects</b>
6	Drum with Hammer [19??]
7	Photo Album of West Africa; Photographs of Rhodesia; 1918; 1940
	<b>Subject and Topic Files</b>
8	Foreign Policy; Belgian Congo Situation; Colonization; Wilfrid and Fred Bunker; Cairo; Ethiopia; 1903-1945
9	French and Belgian Colonies; Conseil Protestant du Congo; Peace Settlement; Algeria and Belgian Congo; 1903-1948