Introduction
Approximately 6.5 cubic feet

The records of the Western Historical Manuscript Collection (WHMC)-St. Louis contains administrative correspondence, meeting minutes, and monthly and annual reports pertaining to the founding and operation of the office. Subjects of interest include the controversy between the State Historical Society of Missouri (SHSMO) and the University of Missouri–Saint Louis (UMSL) regarding WHMC-St. Louis’s desire to remain independent from WHMC, the creation of UMSL’s University Archives, and the development of WHMC-St. Louis’s oral history program. The materials in this collection date from 1967 to 2011.

The Western Historical Manuscript (WHMC)-St. Louis was established in 1968 as part of WHMC. Founded in Columbia, Missouri, in 1943 by the University of Missouri, as well a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, WHMC’s mission was to collect and preserve the history of Missouri and the Midwest. In 1963, WHMC became part of the joint collection with the State Historical Society of Missouri (SHSMO), under the direction of Dr. Richard Brownlee. In 1968, WHMC adopted a University-wide manuscript collection, with offices eventually opening in Kansas City and Rolla in 1980.

Dr. James Norris, a professor of history at UMSL, served as WHMC-St. Louis’s first Associate Director and Irene Cortinovis became the office’s first professional archivist in 1971; she would later become Associate Director in 1975. Cortinovis shepherded most of WHMC-St. Louis’s initial donations, which focused on 20th century St. Louis history. Early donations included the Young Christian Women’s Association (S0343) and the League of Women Voters of Missouri (S0232). Cortinovis’s most notable achievement was the oral history program, which documented the history of St. Louis’s ragtime jazz performers, women in labor unions, St. Louis socialists, and women in the seventies.

Although the WHMC-St. Louis was officially part of WHMC, Norris and Cortinovis desired the freedom to pursue their collection development initiatives. Norris and Cortinovis divided WHMC-St. Louis’s operations into three separate programs under the banner of the Archives and Manuscripts Division: Urban and Industrial Manuscripts, University Archives, and Oral History. They believed that this administrative structure would enable them to distinguish themselves from WHMC and provide assurance to potential donors that their collections would remain in St. Louis.

In 1977, Dr. Richard Brownlee began tightening administrative control over the joint collection. Brownlee believed that WHMC’s Associate Directors should report directly to him and abide by standardized cataloging and indexing conventions. Cortinovis opposed centralization, fearing that WHMC would take control of the manuscripts collection and that some donors would be unwilling to give their papers to the St. Louis Research Center.
if they would not remain in St. Louis. Despite opposition to Dr. Brownlee’s plan he restored the original administrative structure of the joint collection. Cortinovis retired in April 1980 in part due to Brownlee’s centralization plan.

Ann Kenney (1980-1986) succeeded Cortinovis and continued expanding the WHMC-St. Louis’s collection. During her tenure as Associate Director, she acquired the Thomas Dooley Papers (S0464), the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign Records (S0454), and the Edward J. Mallinckrodt Papers (S0452). After Ann Kenney resigned from WHMC in 1986, Pat Adams (1987-1989), became Associate Director, acquiring the Young Men’s Christian Association Records (S0473) and the Hardy Salt Company Records (S0379). Ann Morris (1989-2000) replaced Pat Adams and was instrumental in the acquisition of the Marlin Perkins Papers (S0516), the Wild Canid Survival and Research Center Records (S0535), and the Francis Scheidegger Collection (S0566). William “Zelli” Fishetti (2000-2011) was WHMC-St. Louis’s last Association Director. Under Fishetti’s leadership, WHMC-St. Louis accepted the donations of the Rannells Family Papers (S0786) and the Jay and Fran Landesman Papers (S0604, S0608). He was also instrumental in WHMC’s early adoption of digitization technology and helped create WHMC-St. Louis’s photo database.

In early January 2011, the University merged WHMC with SHSMO. The WHMC name was retired, and SHSMO became the sole manager of both collections, although the University continues to own the collections originally managed by WHMC research offices. Fischetti remained Associate Director of the St. Louis office through this transition until his retirement in 2016.

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The Personnel series is restricted indefinitely.

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Personnel

Associate Director, 1985-1986
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