

Collection #
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OM 0591
CT 2320–2342
F 1876
FD0001-0002

**CHARLES J. SHIELDS
RESEARCH COLLECTION, 1939-2012**

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Processed by

Kathleen S. Clark
February, 2014

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	15 manuscript boxes; 4 oversize manuscript folders; 1 box photographs; 23 cassette tapes; 12 DVD's; 1 reel microfilm; 2 flash drives.
COLLECTION DATES:	1939–2012
PROVENANCE:	Charles J. Shields, Charlottesville, Virginia, 2014
RESTRICTIONS:	None
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REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	SC 1509 Kurt Vonnegut Collection
ACCESSION NUMBER:	2014.0188
NOTES:	Files from the USB drives have been moved into the digital collection file. Please use digital file for access.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Charles J. Shields grew up in the Midwest and in 1997 left a career as a high school teacher and administrator in a rural, central Illinois school to focus on independent writing. Over the next several years he published twenty histories and biographies for young people. His first biography for adults, *Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee*, became a *New York Times* bestseller in 2006. Two years later, Shields published a young adult version of his Harper Lee biography, *I Am Scout: The Biography of Harper Lee*, which received several awards for young non-fiction.

Shields contacted Kurt Vonnegut in 2006 for permission to write a biography on the Indianapolis native and American author. Although Vonnegut initially refused, Shields persisted and eventually received a post card from Vonnegut on which the writer had sketched a self portrait and the letters "OK." Shields met and corresponded with Vonnegut often over the next year until when Vonnegut passed away resulting from a fall at his home. With his personal interviews with Vonnegut and the discovery of 1,500 letters to or from Vonnegut, Shields was able to construct his biography of Vonnegut as a writer, father, husband, struggling freelancer and then suddenly famous American writer. *And So It Goes: Kurt Vonnegut: A Life*, published in 2011, was selected as a *New York Times* Notable Book and *Washington Post* Nonfiction Book.

With other biographers Nigel Hamilton, James McGrath Morris and Debby Applegate, Charles J. Shields co-founded Biographers International Organization in 2009. BIO is a non-profit organization that promotes the art and craft of biography.

Sources:

<http://www.charlesjshields.net>

<http://us.macmillan.com/charlesjshields#>

http://www.amazon.com/Charles-J.-Shields/eB001JS43GE/ref=dp_byline_cont_book_1

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection is made up of 15 manuscript boxes, 1 oversized manuscript box, 1 box of photographs, 23 cassette tapes, 12 DVD's, 1 reel of microfilm, and 2 flash drives containing research materials used by Charles J. Shields to write his authorized biography of American writer and Indianapolis native Kurt Vonnegut. The collection also includes Shields' personal correspondence relating to the publication of *And So It Goes: Kurt Vonnegut: A Life*. The range of dates for these materials is 1939–2012.

Materials included in Series 1 are primarily copies of clipping and Vonnegut correspondence with family, friends, and fellow writers, 19139–2007. Series 2 contains copies of essays and articles relating to the Vonnegut family. Items included are genealogies, copies of obituaries and excerpts from family diaries.

Series 3 contains miscellaneous items relating to Kurt Vonnegut such as copies of Dresden (Germany) Flight Log, 1945, records from Shortridge High School, copies of silk screens of Vonnegut's art work, and programs and obituaries from the time of Vonnegut's death.

Series 4 contains copies of printed resources and academic essays on the works of Kurt Vonnegut. These include resource lists from the University of Virginia, University of Delaware, The Smithsonian Archives, the Library of Congress, and printed materials from the Lilly Library at Indiana University. Also included are copies of essays by Gail Godwin, Jerome Klinkowitz, Donald Fiene, and a copy of Mark Leed's PhD dissertation from the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Materials in Series 5 include printed articles either by or about Kurt Vonnegut. These are primarily from magazines or clippings. Also included are copies of Vonnegut's two master's theses.

Series 6 contains 6 manuscript boxes of transcripts and notes from oral interviews conducted by Charles Shields during the course of his research. Interviews were conducted with family members, childhood friends, fellow prisoners of war, friends from the writing community, and business associates.

Series 7 consists of Shields' consent forms and correspondence relating to the publication of his Vonnegut biography. Also included are copies of reference lists, bibliographies, and tentative appendices for the biography.

The materials in Series 8 are copies of publications used by Shields for background information. These include books about Shortridge History and the German community in Indianapolis.

Series 9 consists of feature stories from newspapers/magazines regarding the works of Kurt Vonnegut.

Series 10 contains 8 photographs including Kurt Vonnegut, Sr., Edith Lieber Vonnegut's bridal photograph, Bernard Vonnegut and Jane Cox Vonnegut with their children Mark and Edith. Also included are photographs of a Bayonne, New Jersey, train wreck from

1958, and a photograph of Kurt Vonnegut in Prague with Jaroslav Koran and William P. Kiehl.

Series 11 materials are cassette tapes of oral interviews conducted by Shields in the course of his research for his Vonnegut biography. These include interviews with childhood friends, fellow WW II soldiers, and colleagues from the writing community, particularly the Iowa Writer's Group.

Series 12 contains DVD's pertaining to Vonnegut. Photographs by Anne Bossi and those credited to the Indiana Historical Society are included as well as recordings of interviews with Vonnegut on *World Day*, *The Dick Cavett Show*, and PBS' *South Africa Now*.

Series 13 includes 1 reel of microfilm containing Vonnegut materials and 2 flash drives. The flash drives containing written transcripts conducted by Shields, copies of clippings, and audio recordings of the interviews.

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NUVO-God Bless You Mr. Vonnegut, April 18–25, 2007

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Group Photo, Alphau, New York, 1950, includes Jane, Mark, and Edith Vonnegut

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Kurt Vonnegut, Jaroslav Koran, and William P. Kiehl, Prague, 1985

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Box 1, Folder 8

Series 11: Cassette Tapes–Shields Interviews

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Shields Interview with Kurt Vonnegut, 12/-2/06 (twice), 12/05/06, 12/15/06, 02/05/07	CT 2320
Shields Interview with Philip Damon, 01/20/07 (Iowa Writer's Workshop)	CT 2321
Shields Interview with S. Miller Harris, <i>Cornell Sun</i>	CT 2322
Shields Interview with Vic Josie, 01/05/07 (Childhood Friend of Vonnegut's)	CT 2323
Shields Interview with Suzanne McConnell, 01/18/07 (Iowa Writer's Workshop)	CT 2324
Shields Interview with William F. Shipley, 01/29/07 (Army Buddy)	CT 2325
Shields Interview with John Casey, 11/18/06	CT 2326
Shields Interview with Harley W. Slaback (Army Buddy)	CT 2327
Shields Interview with George Jeffrey, 01/05/07 (Childhood Friend)	CT 2328
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Shields Interview with Donald Betlach (Army Buddy and fellow POW at the Battle of the Bulge)	CT 2332
Shields Interview with Alexander H. Marsh, 01/29/07	CT 2333
Shields Interview with Loree Rackstraw, 11/15/06	CT 2334
Shields Interview with Ian MacMillan, 01/30/07 (Iowa Writer's Workshop)	CT 2335
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Shields Interview with Jim Adams, 11/16/06	CT 2337
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Shields Interview with Gifford B. Doxsee, 10/04/06 (fellow POW with Vonnegut in Dresden)	CT 2342

Series 12: DVD'S

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Original Disc of Vonnegut Photos 1968 by Anne Bossi	DVD 0681
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. on CNN <i>World Day</i> , 10/19/1989	DVD 0682
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. on CNBC <i>The Dick Cavett Show</i> , 10/25/1989	DVD 0683
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. on WNET-TV/PBS <i>South Africa Now</i> , 12/09/1989	DVD 0684
Medienwerkstatt Ihre Auftrage	DVD 0685
#8252 Indiana Historical Society Credit	DVD 0686
#7952 Vonnegut Hardware—Credit: Bass Photo Co. Collection, Indiana Historical Society	DVD 0687
Langmuir's World	DVD 0688
<i>Cosmos Cantata</i> (text by Kurt Vonnegut)	DVD 0689
Essential Vonnegut, Interviews Conducted by Walter Miller	DVD 0690

Tick Tick (Simon Heselev and Kurt Vonnegut,)2003

DVD 0691

Series 13: Microfilm and Digital Files

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Kurt Vonnegut Materials

Shields' Flash Drives (2)

CONTAINER

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FD 0001-0002
[See digital file]