



ArchivesSpace
a community served by ✦ LYRASIS

Guide to the Collection on the 1950s Quiz Show Scandal, 1957-2008 — 123.1287

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on April 26, 2024.

English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

The Strong

One Manhattan Square

Rochester, NY 14607

library@museumofplay.org

URL: <https://www.museumofplay.org/collections/brian-sutton-smith-library-archives-of-play/>

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Historical Note	3
Collection Scope and Content Note	4
Arrangement	4
Administrative Information	4
Related Materials	5
Controlled Access Headings	6
Collection Inventory	6

Summary Information

Repository:	Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong
Source:	Boden, Robert ("Bob")
Title:	Collection on the 1950s quiz show scandal
ID:	123.1287
Date [inclusive]:	1957-2008
Date [bulk]:	1957-1959
Physical Description:	0.5 Linear Feet (1 archival box)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	This collection consists of materials related to the 1950s quiz show scandal and its aftermath. The materials date from 1957 to 2008 with the bulk of materials dating from 1957 to 1959. The collection is comprised of newspaper and magazine articles, telegraphs, Stempel's attestation letter, and a transcript of a recorded conversation between Herbert Stempel and Dan Enright.

Preferred Citation

Collection on the 1950s quiz show scandal, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Historical Note

In the 1950s, a series of accusations of popular quiz shows being rigged incited the American population and the press. The scandals involved producers and contestants of *Twenty-One*, *Dotto*, *The Big Surprise* and *Tic-Tac-Dough*. In 1956 the quiz show *Twenty-One* aired on NBC to very low ratings. The show sponsors were unhappy, and producers started rigging the shows to make them interesting. Producers would feed contestants answers, give them categories they were familiar with, or tell them to intentionally answer a question incorrectly. *Twenty-One* contestant, Herb Stempel, went to the press with allegations of cheating but was ignored until another contestant accused *Dotto* of rigging in 1958.

The combined complaints were enough to initiate a New York County grand jury investigation. Several producers and contestants committed perjury in front of the grand jury to protect themselves. Charles Van Doren and Elfrida von Nordroff pleaded guilty to perjury and 12 other contestants were also arrested. There were no indictments, but the judge sealed the findings and testimony and aroused suspicion that corruption was involved, which attracted the attention of Congress. A formal congressional subcommittee investigation, headed by Joseph Stone, began in August 1959. Charles Van Doren and other contestants testified before Congress. Findings from the congressional hearings led to the amendment of the Communications Act of 1934 to prohibit the rigging of game shows.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Collection Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of materials related to the 1950s quiz show scandal and its aftermath. Many of the documents pertain to Herbert Stempel's appearances on *Twenty-One* in 1956, including copies of an attestation letter written by Stempel in February, 1957, and a transcript of a recorded conversation between Herbert Stempel and Dan Enright that took place a few weeks afterwards. Clippings and articles cover the initial scandal, the grand jury and congressional subcommittee investigation, and retrospective articles published many years later.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

Materials are housed in one archival box and are arranged alphabetically by folder title.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

The Strong
One Manhattan Square
Rochester, NY 14607

library@museumofplay.org

URL: <https://www.museumofplay.org/collections/brian-sutton-smith-library-archives-of-play/>

Conditions Governing Access

The collection on the 1950s quiz show scandal is open for research use by staff of The Strong and users of its library and archives.

Conditions Governing Use

Though the donor has not transferred intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) to The Strong, they have given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

Processed by

Laura Boland, April 2024.

Processing Note

Newspaper and magazine clippings were digitized and replaced with printed copies on acid free archival paper.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The collection was donated to The Strong in March 2023 as a gift of Bob Boden and accessioned under Object ID 123.1287.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Materials

Related Materials

Book, *All The Right Answers*, a novel written by Robert Noah and published in 1988 by Harvourt Brace Jovanovich, was transferred to the library collection.

The Albert Freedman papers (Obj. ID 123.4838) were donated to The Strong in 2023 as a gift of Derek Freedman.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Television quiz shows
- Twenty-One (Television program)
- National Archives of Game Show History
- Boden, Robert ("Bob")
- Stempel, Herb, 1926-2020
- Enright, Dan
- Barry & Enright Productions
- Barry, Jack, 1918-1984
- Van Doren, Charles

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
"All the Answers: The quiz-show scandals - and the aftermath," article by Charles Van Doren, Personal History, July 28, 2008 Issue. (printed from web edition), 2008, July 28	box 1	folder 1
Barry, Jack - telegraphs from viewers, re faith in integrity and opening statement on Twenty-One, 1958, September 8-9	box 1	folder 2
Broadcasting, January 25, 1960 issue, article re Magnuson committee, with FCC, FTC, TV Networks, NAB, and advertisers, 1960, January 25	box 1	folder 3
Clippings, 1958-1959	box 1	folder 4
Clippings, 1959 and undated	box 1	folder 5
Radio/TV News articles, 1959	box 1	folder 6
"The return of a TV outcast," article by Dick Russell re Jack Barry, TV Guide, (photocopy), 1979, December 1	box 1	folder 7
Stempel, Herbert, attestation letter re appearance on Twenty-One, (copied), 1957, February 22	box 1	folder 8
Stempel, Herbert and Enright, Dan, taped conversation transcript, 1957, March 7	box 1	folder 9
Time magazine vol. 74 no. 20, article, "Television: the tarnished image," re consequences of the quiz show scandal, 1959	box 1	folder 10
Stempel, Herbert, attestation letter re appearance on <i>Twenty-One</i> , 1957, February 22	oversize 1	folder 1