



Women in Communications, Inc., St. Louis Chapter Records (S0009)

Collection Number: S0009

Collection Title: Women in Communications, Inc., St. Louis Chapter Records

Dates: 1926-1998

Creator: Women in Communications, inc.

Abstract: This collection contains the records of the St. Louis Chapter of Women in Communications, Inc., formerly called Theta Sigma Phi. Women in Communications sponsored various programs to educate, encourage, and reward women in the field of communications. They also sponsored an annual “Ladies of the Press” luncheon. The materials in this collection include correspondence, minutes, reports, bylaws, constitution, directories, brochures, newsletters, photographs, and scrapbooks.

Collection Size: 4.75 cubic feet
(105 folders, 1 oversize folder, 208 photographs, 1 microfilm reel)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](http://www.shsmo.org). If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

Restrictions on Use: The Donor has given and assigned to the University all rights of copyright, which the Donor has in the Materials and in such of the Donor’s works as may be found among any collections of Materials received by the University from others.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Women in Communications, Inc., St. Louis Chapter Records* (S0009); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

Donor Information: The records were donated to the University of Missouri by Sheila Hoffmeister on January 23, 1980 (Accession No. SA2259). Additions were made on August 28, 1981 by Barbara Pierce (Accession No. SA2424); February 23, 1983 by Verna Smith (Accession No. SA2511); September 15, 1983 by Verna Smith (Accession No. SA2559); August 9, 1988 by Nancy Lankford (SA2873); August 10, 1988 by Nancy Langford (SA2875); and November 11, 2006 by Judie Linville (SA3708).

Processed by: Processed by Western Historical Manuscript Collection Staff, November 2006.
Revised by Zack Palitzsch, September 2021.

Historical Note:

Founded originally in 1909 as Theta Sigma Phi, Women in Communication, Inc. was a national fraternity for women in journalism. The fraternity began on the University of Washington campus by journalism students Georgine MacDougall Davis, Helen Ross Lantz, and five other newly enrolled female journalism students. News of this women-only fraternity spread throughout the nation, resulting in the establishment of other Theta Sigma Phi chapters in other colleges and universities. The St. Louis Chapter of Theta Sigma Phi was organized in 1923.

Besides providing a professional network for women journalists, Theta Sigma Phi was also involved in civic and professional activities. They conducted publicity workshops, co-sponsored the Junior Journalist Contest alongside Sigma Delta Chi (the men's national journalism fraternity), and published *Grand Views* for Veteran's Hospital in St. Louis as a part of the Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project. They also donated books each Christmas to children's homes, taught writing-to-sell classes at University City Adult Evening School, and gave semesterly scholarships to female journalism undergraduate students.

Since 1956, Theta Sigma Phi sponsored an annual spring luncheon, known as "Ladies of the Press," in which they honor women who have been in the news for outstanding civic, professional, or personal achievements. In 1964, they wrote and published the *St. Louis Guidebook* in commemoration of St. Louis' bicentennial. The national organization held two conventions in St. Louis, in 1955 and 1965, the latter of which focused on world peace. The 1965 Convention Chair, Bea Adams, solicited responses from prominent women from around the world on how to achieve lasting peace, which they published in a booklet entitled *Paths to Peace*.

For several years in the late 1960s and early 1970s, national members discussed expanding membership to not only include members from other communications backgrounds besides journalism, but also to accept men into the organization. Finally, in October 1972, the national organization voted to change Theta Sigma Phi to Women in Communications, Inc. Following the name change, the organization accepted membership from women who worked in other areas of communication, including radio and television. The emphasis shifted from a journalism and writing background to mass electronic communication as well. Initially, the St. Louis Chapter voted "no" to the name change in the belief that the new name should not contain the word "women," when discussion persisted on admitting men into the organization. However, a narrow majority of chapters voted "yes" to the name change.

In 1996, the national Executive Board informed chapter presidents that Women in Communications, Inc. had declared bankruptcy. The national organization recommended the dissolution of all chapters and to subsequently form a group to be called the Association of Women in Communications. The St. Louis Chapter Executive Board voted to not affiliate with the new group because the financial demands would be too great. Additionally, they were not allowed to stay an independent group because they were no longer legally able to use the Women in Communications name. As a result, after nearly 70 years as a chapter, on December 13, 1996, the St. Louis Chapter disbanded. Many other chapters followed suit and did not rejoin the new organization.

Although the St. Louis Chapter no longer exists, the Association of Women in Communications continues to operate as a professional organization supporting women in the communications field. Only a handful of chapters remain, with a total of 1,100 members as of 2021.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following eight series:

Administration
Financial
Membership
Events and Projects
Publications
Photographs
Oversize
Microfilm

Scope and Content Note:**Administration**

This series contains bylaws, constitutions, correspondence, meeting minutes, and reports regarding the governance of the Women in Communications, Inc., St. Louis Chapter. Also included are correspondence, membership lists, and reports documenting the St. Louis Chapter's involvement in establishing the Sacramento, California, Chapter. Materials of note include executive board and general chapter meeting minutes and correspondence concerning the dissolution of Women in Communications and the St. Louis Chapter's decision to disband completely. The materials in this series date from 1926 to 1997 and are arranged alphabetically.

Financial

This series contains balance sheets, budgets, correspondence, and reports regarding St. Louis Chapter's finances including incoming dues, expenses, donations, and scholarships awarded. Also included is a detailed balance journal spanning from 1973 to 1982. The materials in this series date from 1969 to 1982 and are arranged alphabetically.

Membership

This series contains applications, correspondence, dues, membership lists, proposals, and reports regarding local, national, and student memberships. Also included in this series is a handbook for new members and correspondence and reports regarding initiation. Materials of note include local and national membership directories. The materials in this series date from 1931 to 1998 and are arranged alphabetically.

Events and Projects

This series contains awards, booklets, correspondence, flyers, and programs for events Women in Communications held including workshops, classes, seminars, luncheons, and conventions. The materials also document various projects the St. Louis Chapter administered, including the Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project and the Passage House Project. Materials of note include

lists of honorees for Ladies of the Press, an award given to women for their outstanding work in journalism and communication. Also included are correspondence and writing examples from the High School Press Journalism Conference and Clinic and the Junior Journalist Contest. The materials in this series date from 1954 to 1996 and are arranged alphabetically.

Publications

This series contains bulletins, guidebooks, magazines, newsletters, newspaper clippings, and press releases regarding Women in Communications' national and local branches as well as what was going on in communications at the time. The bulk of the material in this series were published by Women in Communications including *The Matrix* and *The Professional Communicator* magazines. Materials of note include national and local newsletters, which document the activities of the organization. The materials in this series date from 1952 to 1956 and are arranged alphabetically.

Photographs

This series contains photographs regarding the activities of the St. Louis Chapter of Women in Communications. Many of the images depict the Ladies of the Press Luncheon and honorees. Also included are negatives and contact sheets of a Passage House Project event held in 1995. The bulk of the photographs were removed from several volumes of scrapbooks. The materials in this series date from 1960 to 1995 and are arranged chronologically.

Oversize

This series contains one oversize folder of special issues of *The Professional Communicator*. Specific issues include volume 2, issue 1; and volume 3, issues 1-2 and 4-7. The issues are dated from 1982 to 1983 and are arranged chronologically.

Microfilm

This series contains nine volumes of scrapbooks. Within the scrapbooks are mostly photographs and newspaper clippings, but also contain event programs, flyers, membership directories, and newsletters regarding the activities of the St. Louis Chapter. Topics of interest included in the scrapbooks include Ladies of the Press Luncheons and honorees and classes held at the University City Adult Evening School. All the materials were previously removed from the scrapbook and are included in previous series. The materials in this series date from 1960 to 1979 and are arranged chronologically on the microfilm.

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