

MIND



An Inventor's Guide to the Preservation, Protection, and Donation of Personal Papers

Send information on the following topics:

- Understanding the donation process
- Artifacts
- Preservation of materials
- Locating an appropriate repository
- Locating an appraiser
- Financial and tax implications
- Copyright/intellectual property rights

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PRESERVING CREATIVITY,
INVENTION, AND INNOVATION

MIND

The Lemelson Center
for the Study of Invention & Innovation



An Inventor's Guide to the
Preservation, Protection, and
Donation of Personal Papers

Victor L. Ochoa



Victor L. Ochoa (ca. 1850–1945) with a prototype of his “Ochoaplane,” ca. 1908–11. He designed his plane with an automobile in mind, and it included collapsible wings so that it could be housed in a garage or barn. Ochoa also invented and patented a reversible motor, magnetic brake, rail magnetic brake, windmill, and wrench.

○ Behind every invention, there's a story.

Courtesy Victor L. Ochoa Papers, Archives Center, NMAH

Cover: *Terms of Intellect* by Linda Helton



To ensure that the records of invention are preserved for the future, the Lemelson Center and the National Museum of American History Archives Center established the Modern Inventors Documentation (MIND) Program. Working directly with inventors, the MIND Program **promotes the advancement and diffusion of knowledge** about American inventors; **acts as a clearinghouse** for inventors seeking to preserve and donate their historical materials; **identifies and preserves** the papers and other historical materials of living inventors; **promotes access** to and use of this documentary record by scholars, students, and the public; and **identifies inventors** whose papers and artifacts have particular significance to the research and educational goals of the National Museum of American History.

The papers and artifacts of modern invention often are at risk. Geographic mobility, limited storage space, lack of knowledge about potential repositories, and busy schedules all make it easy to postpone dealing with non-current documents and files.

This guide describes the types of materials inventors may have, discusses why they are important, and explains how they can be preserved for future generations.



Amazing Grace

Lt. Hopper and Spec. White
examining sequence mechanism
at Harvard Computation
Laboratory, August 8, 1944

In December 1943, **Grace Murray Hopper** (1906–1992) joined the navy. Her first assignment was working with computers at Harvard University, developing codes into languages that could be read by the Mark I computer. In the late 1950s, she helped develop COBOL (Common Business-Oriented Language). Her other contributions to the computing field include work for Eckert-Mauchly Computer Corporation (UNIVAC I), Remington Rand, and the Digital Equipment Corporation. They earned her the nickname of “Amazing Grace.”

Hopper, who eventually became a rear admiral, retired in 1986. She donated her papers documenting her affiliation with the Harvard Computation Laboratory (1944–49) to the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History in the late 1960s.

Courtesy Grace Murray Hopper Papers, Archives Center, NMAH



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WHAT YOU CAN DO

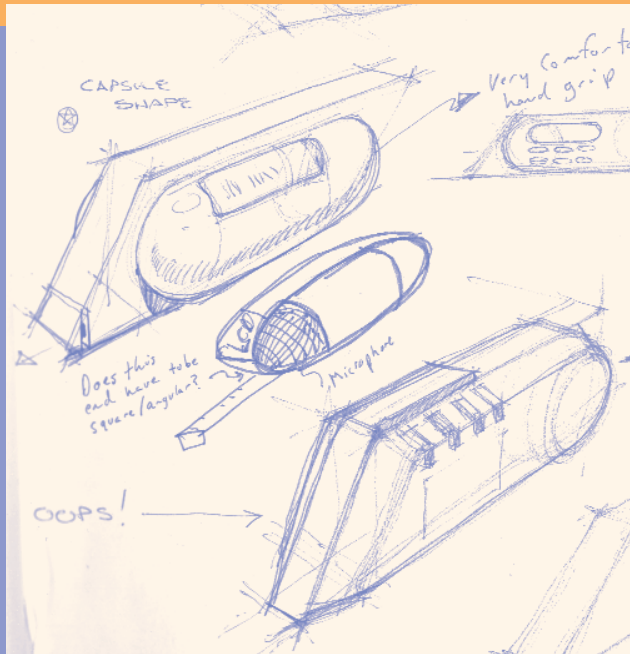
The history of invention is in your hands. Whether you are an independent inventor or working in a corporate or academic laboratory, you can help save the records of your life’s work. The papers, artifacts, and electronic media that you have generated attest to the creative spirit of American invention. By making sure these materials are preserved, the achievements of individuals like you, who have made significant contributions to American life, will be recognized by many groups.

The records of invention help students, scholars, and the general public understand more fully the creative process and provide perspective on how invention and innovation affect our daily lives. Historians and curators rely on these materials for exhibitions and research projects. Without your help, this rich resource will not exist to serve future generations.

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Andy Butler



In 1990, 34-year-old **Andy Butler** and other Silicon Valley engineers patented a new level dependent on high-tech electronics to show digitally the precise angle of the surface being checked. The SmartLevel found a market among users of traditional levels who needed precise degree measurements. Butler and his colleagues were young, entrepreneurial visionaries who combined advanced engineering know-how with a humanistic approach to public interests and needs. Although SmartLevel never became one of Silicon Valley's giants, it demonstrates that a small group of individuals can successfully field-test, manufacture, assemble, market, and sell a new product.

The SmartLevel materials were donated to the Smithsonian Institution by Andy Butler, inventor; Kevin Reeder, designer; and Brian Bayley, general manager of SmartTool Technologies. In addition to the archival records, the National Museum of American History acquired two SmartLevels in 1992 for its hand-tool collection.

Utility sketchbook/design notebook of inventor Andy Butler and designer Kevin Reeder, 1988

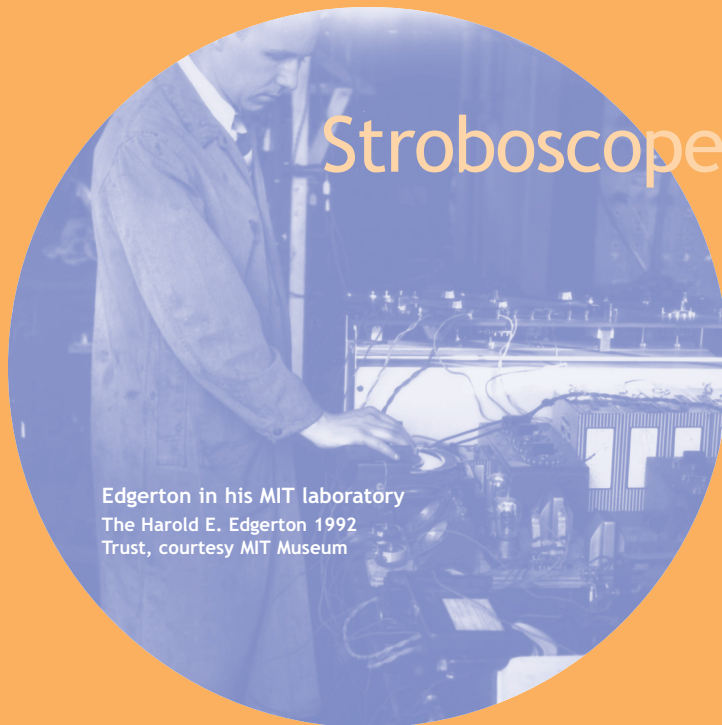
Courtesy SmartLevel Collection, Archives Center, NMAH

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HOW WE CAN HELP

The MIND Program staff is ready to aid inventors, their families, and their colleagues in handling the papers, records, and artifacts created during the inventive process. We can guide you in determining what should be preserved and why, and provide preservation advice. We can give information on locating an appraiser, on the financial and tax implications of donating your papers and artifacts, and on copyright and other intellectual property issues. We will help you locate an appropriate repository for your materials and explain the donation process and your role as a donor. Finally, information on your materials will become part of our growing national database on collections documenting the history of invention in the United States.

Behind every invention, there's a story.



Edgerton in his MIT laboratory
The Harold E. Edgerton 1992
Trust, courtesy MIT Museum

Behind every invention, there's a story.

Harold E. Edgerton (1903–1990), an electrical engineer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), was interested in what happened when sudden change, like the surge caused by lightning striking power lines, reached an electric motor. By 1931, Edgerton had turned his experiments with motors and mercury-arc tubes into a commercial product that he called the stroboscope. It could measure the speed of machinery in motion and detect irregularities in a mechanism's operation. Fortunately, his career is amply documented in laboratory notebooks, correspondence, oral-history interviews, artifacts, and more in the collections at MIT.

This incredibly rich resource exists primarily because of Edgerton's own efforts. Planning with the museum and archives professionals at MIT, he made regular donations of materials. After his death, his family established a foundation that sponsored the full cataloging of Edgerton's archival collection and turned over additional materials to both the museum and archives.



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THINKING ABOUT YOUR HISTORICAL RESOURCES

To assist inventors and their families in preserving the historical resources of invention, this checklist may be used as preparation for more detailed discussions with an archival repository. We urge you to act now while the materials are still intact.

What types of materials do you have?

- Artifacts/Objects—
models, parts of
inventions, prototypes,
tools
- Company Records
- Computer Disks
- Correspondence—
business, legal, personal
- Course Notes
- Diaries
- Drawings
- Financial Records
- Grant Applications
- Instructional Materials
- Laboratory Notebooks
- Logbooks
- Patents/Patent
Applications
- Photographs
- Publications/Catalogs,
Reports
- Sound Recordings
- Videotapes/Films

Are your materials in good physical condition?

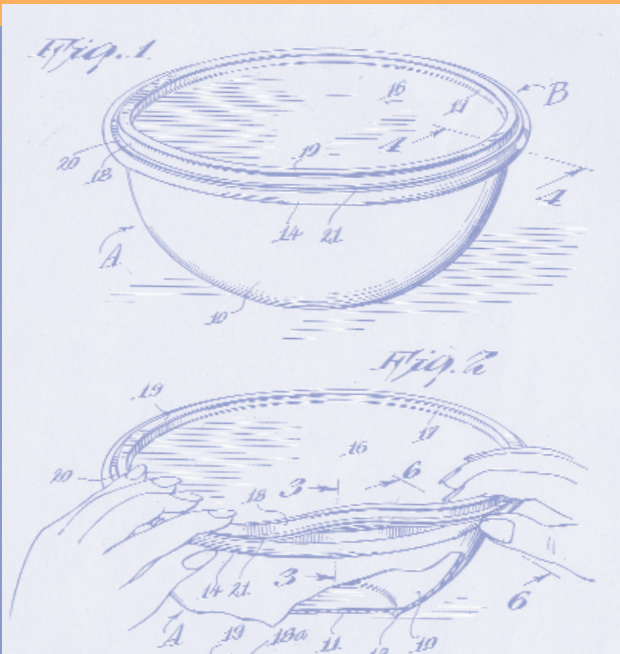
Are your materials organized?

Do you have an inventory list?

What is the approximate time span of the materials?

What is the approximate size of your collection?

Where and how are the materials stored?



Tupper patent for salad bowl, December 17, 1957
 Courtesy Earl S. Tupper Papers, Archives Center, NMAH

In 1937, Earl Silas Tupper (1907–1983), an aspiring Massachusetts inventor, took a job with Viscoloid, DuPont’s plastics division in Leominster, Massachusetts. He left in just a year to start his own plastics business, which prospered through World War II. After the war, Tupper experimented with polyethylene—a new material produced by DuPont—for use in injection molding. He also patented the airtight “Tupper Seal” for food containers. Together, these innovations laid the foundation for the success of Tupperware.

Earl Tupper’s children donated his papers to the Smithsonian Institution in 1992. His notebooks and diaries, correspondence, advertising material, and other records of his work on Tupperware attest to his ingenuity of a man who once referred to himself as a “ham inventor and Yankee trader.” The Tupper family also made a generous gift to assist in the care and preservation of the collection.



The Lemelson Center

for the Study of Invention & Innovation

The Lemelson Center was established at the National Museum of American History in 1995 through a generous gift from The Lemelson Foundation, a private philanthropy, and named for its benefactors—Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson. Jerome Lemelson (1923–1997) earned more than 550 patents for a range of inventions, from toys to robotics, and his work was used in products such as the camcorder and cordless telephone.

The Center’s mission is to document, interpret, and disseminate information about invention and innovation, to encourage inventive creativity in young people, and to foster an appreciation of the central role invention and innovation play in the history of the United States.

For more information on the Lemelson Center and the Modern Inventors Documentation Program, contact:

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○ Behind every invention, there's a story.

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