



Guide to the Consumer Reports. Rhoda Karpatkin papers, 1935-2023

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Duke University

Durham 27708

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Summary

Collection Title:

Consumer Reports. Rhoda Karpatkin papers, 1935-2023

Creator:

Consumer Reports (Firm); Karpatkin, Rhoda (Rhoda Hendrick), 1930-2023

Source:

John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History

Abstract:

Consumer Reports is a product testing and consumer advocacy nonprofit organization based in Yonkers, N.Y., founded in 1936. Rhoda Karpatkin is a lawyer and consumer advocate who served as Director of Consumers Union from 1974 until her retirement in 2001. The collection includes clippings; correspondence and memoranda; corporate and financial audits and reports; legal and legislative documents; meeting agendas and minutes; newsletters, pamphlets and other publications; photographs; press releases; speeches; texts of articles and other printed materials that document Karpatkins career with Consumers Union as well as her involvement with the international consumer movement. Topics include the Bhopal gas disaster; communism and the anti-communist movement during the Cold War; consumer protection; drug export controls; economic and human rights; environmental justice and policy protections; history of Consumers Union; sustainable consumption; tobacco use and passive health hazards; and transnationalism and international businesses. Individuals represented in the collection include Colston Warne, Eileen Nic, Esther Peterson, James Guest, Madeline Ross, Manubhai Shah, Michel van Hulsten, and Ralph Nader. Organizations represented include the Administrative Conference of the United States, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Consumer Reports Books, Consumers Union Foundation, Consumers' Association of Canada, International Organization of Consumers' Unions (now Consumers International), Media and Consumer Foundation, and the United Nations. Acquired as part of the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History.

Extent:

59.0 Linear Feet

Language:

Materials in English, Arabic, Basque, Chinese, Czech, French, German, Greek, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Slovenian, Spanish, Turkish.

Collection ID:

RL.11946

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1bf17>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Consumer Reports. Rhoda Karpatkin papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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Background

Scope and Content

The collection includes clippings; correspondence and memoranda; corporate and financial audits and reports; legal and legislative documents; meeting agendas and minutes; newsletters, pamphlets and other publications; photographs; press releases; speeches; texts of articles and other printed materials that document Karpatkins career with Consumers Union as well as her involvement with the international consumer movement. Topics include the Bhopal gas disaster; communism and the anti-communist movement during the Cold War; consumer protection; drug export controls; economic and human rights; environmental justice and policy protections; history of Consumers Union; sustainable consumption; tobacco use and passive health hazards; and transnationalism and international businesses. Individuals represented in the collection include Colston Warne, Eileen Nic, Esther Peterson, James Guest, Madeline Ross, Manubhai Shah, Michel van Hulsten, and Ralph Nader. Organizations represented include the Administrative Conference of the United States, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Consumer Reports Books, Consumers Union Foundation, Consumers' Association of Canada, International Organization of Consumers' Unions (now Consumers International), Media and Consumer Foundation, and the United Nations.

Biographical/Historical

Consumer Reports is a product testing and consumer advocacy nonprofit organization based in Yonkers, N.Y., founded in 1936. Rhoda Karpatkin is a lawyer and consumer advocate who served as Director of Consumers Union from 1974 until her retirement in 2001.

Rhoda Karpatkin was born in 1930 in New York. She attended Brooklyn College (BA, 1951) and Yale Law School (LLB 1953). She had a private law practice (1954-1961) before becoming a partner in Karpatkin, Ohrenstein & Karpatkin (1961-1974); Karpatkin served as outside counsel for Consumers Union from 1958-1974. In 1974 she was selected as the first woman executive director of Consumers Union, a position she held until retiring in 2001. In addition she held

executive positions with the International Organization of Consumers' Unions (President 1985-1991; Vice President 1991-1997; Honorary Secretary from 1997).

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Arrangement

Organized into the following series: Administrative and General Files; Board of Directors; Departments and Divisions; Outside Organizations; Publications; Writings and Speeches; International Organization of Consumers' Unions (IOCU)/ Consumers International (CI); 2026 Additions.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access Restrictions

Access note. Collection contains fragile audiovisual formats that may need to be reformatted before use. Contact Research Services for access.

Access note. Collection contains electronic records that may need to be reformatted. Access copies of electronic records require special equipment. Contact Research Services for access.

Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the Rubenstein Library's Citations, Permissions, and Copyright guide.

Acquisition Information

The Consumer Reports. Rhoda Karpatkin papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a gift in 2019.

Processing Information

Processed by Richard Collier, Nov. 2021 and March 2026;

Accessions described in this collection guide: 2019-0130, 2023-0212.

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Related Materials

Related Material

Related materials may be found in the following Consumer Reports collections held in the Hartman Center:

Board of Directors records;

Colston E. Warne papers;

Consumer Reports Archives records;

Consumer Reports Books records;

Consumers Union Foundation records;

Editorial Department records;

Educational Services Division records;

Eileen Nic papers;

Esther Peterson papers;

International Organization of Consumers' Union records.

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Names and Subjects

- Consumer advocacy
- Consumer education
- consumer protection
- Communism -- United States -- History -- 20th century
- Anti-communist movements -- United States
- International business enterprises
- Human Rights
- Environmental justice
- International Organization of Consumers' Unions
- United Nations
- Peterson, Esther, 1906-1997
- Nic, Eileen
- John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History
- Consumers Union Foundation
- Karpatkin, Rhoda (Rhoda Hendrick), 1930-2023
- Nader, Ralph

Collection Inventory

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50th anniversary of Consumers Union--Dinner, 1985-1986	Box 1
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Physical Description: 2 folders	
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Consumers Union history--Madeline Ross
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