



Guide to the Sidney Winter Papers, 1964-2017

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Summary

Collection Title:

Sidney Winter papers, 1964-2017

Creator:

Winter, Sidney G.; Nelson, Richard R.

Source:

Economists' Papers Archive

Abstract:

Sidney Winter is a white American economist known for his application of evolutionary theory to economics and contributions to the field of evolutionary economics. His scholarship has influenced a range of fields, especially the study of the evolution of firms. Richard Nelson (1930-2025) was an American economist and frequent collaborator of Winter's who emphasized the role of institutions, learning, and routines in shaping economic dynamics. This collection contains drafts, notes, correspondence, and experiments from Winter and Nelson's works on evolutionary economics in the 1970s. It also contains published materials from the 1980s-2010s, including Winter and Nelson's *An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change*. Acquired as part of the Economists' Papers Archive.

Extent:

3 Linear Feet (1 Paige box, 2 Hollinger boxes, and 1 oversize folder.)

Language:

Most materials in English. A small amount of material is in Russian, Japanese, Korean, or Portuguese.

Collection ID:

RL.13163

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1ht87>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of Item], Sidney Winter papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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Background

Scope and Content

This collection documents Sidney G. Winter's collaborative and independent work on evolutionary economics, spanning 1964 to 2017, with a focus on Winter and Nelson's collaborative research. Early materials from 1968-1970 consist of drafts, experiment data, and correspondence for "Forces Generating and Limiting Concentration under Schumpeterian Competition" and "The Schumpeterian Trade-Off Revisited," including detailed revision letters from Paul Joskow and Alvin K. Kelvorick, draft fragments, footnotes, inserts, and simulation runs with graphs, tables, and memos. Complementary files from 1976-1979 center on firm-size distribution experiments, conference materials, essay comments, and press clippings. Other materials from the 1980s contain Winter's "An Essay on the Theory of Production," outlines, calculations, and annotated excerpts from Schumpeter and Walras, alongside joint drafts with Nelson such as "Organizational Capabilities in a Dynamic World." Additional materials from 1976-1982 trace the evolution of Winter and Nelson's *An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change* through chapter drafts, related correspondence, and later topical threads on patents, appropriability, and the Yale Research and Development survey by Winter, Nelson, and others. Winter's professional service appears in International Schumpeter Society newsletters and committee correspondence. Also included are photographs of Winter teaching and multiple international editions of *An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change*. Overall, the collection documents Winter's theorizing, model building, data work, and collaborative process that influenced the field of evolutionary economics.

Biographical/Historical

Sidney G. Winter (b. 1935) is a white American economist known for his contributions to evolutionary economics and the theory of the firm. Winter sought to move beyond the abstract assumptions of neoclassical economics by developing models that reflect the real behavior of organizations. In his 1982 book with Richard Nelson, *An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change*, Winter and Nelson introduced the concept of organizational "routines" as the economic equivalent of genes. They understood them as stable patterns of behavior that shape how firms learn, adapt, and compete. Winter's scholarship has influenced fields from management studies to innovation policy, and his work remains influential to understanding how firms evolve in uncertain environments.

Richard R. Nelson (1930-2025) was Sidney Winter's longtime collaborator and a white American economist best known for his work on innovation, technological change, and economic growth. Nelson's work emphasized the role of institutions, learning, and routines in shaping economic dynamics. Nelson

argued that economic growth is driven not just by capital accumulation but by complex processes of innovation, imitation, and organizational capability. His research placed technological change at the center of economic history and policy. By merging economic theory and evolutionary biology, Nelson helped establish evolutionary economics as a field of study.

Sources: Wikipedia and the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (accessed 2025 September 15).

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Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

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 Sidney Winter papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a gift from Sidney Winter in 2024.

Processing Information

Processed by Reina Henderson, September 2025

Accessions described in this collection guide: 2025-0085.

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Names and Subjects

- Economics -- Methodology
- Economics -- Research
- Evolutionary economics
- Business enterprises -- Economic aspects
- Production (Economic theory)
- Managerial economics
- Economists' Papers Archive
- Schumpeter, Joseph A., 1883-1950
- Winter, Sidney G.
- Nelson, Richard R.

Collection Inventory

Bibliographic index cards, 1960s-1990s	Box 1
"Economic 'Natural Selection' and the Theory of the Firm", 1964	Box 1
"Towards a Neo-Schumpeterian Theory of the Firm", 1968 March	Box 1
Drafts of "Technical Change and the Cognitive Foundations of Production Theory", 1969-1970	Box 1

Physical Description: 2 folders

Notes and correspondence for "Technical Change and the Cognitive Foundations of Production Theory", 1969-1970	Box 1
Conference and published works from other scholars, 1972-1978	Box 1
Drafts of "Firm and Industry Response to Changed Market Conditions", 1976 September	Box 1
Drafts of "Organizational Capabilities in a Dynamic World", 1976 October	Box 1
Drafts of "The Schumpeterian Trade-Offs Revisited", 1977 March	Box 1
Drafts of "Forces Generating and Limiting Concentration Under Schumpeterian Competition", 1977 September	Box 1
Drafts of "Firm and Industry Response to Changed Market Conditions", 1977	Box 1
Drafts of "Forces Generating and Limiting Concentration Under Schumpeterian Competition", 1977	Box 1
Drafts of "Firm and Industry Response to Changed Market Conditions", 1978 January	Box 1
Drafts of "Forces Generating and Limiting Concentration Under Schumpeterian Competition", late 1970s	Box 1
Physical Description: 2 folders	
Notes and correspondence for "Forces Generating and Limiting Concentration Under Schumpeterian Competition", late 1970s	Box 1
Physical Description: 2 folders	
Drafts of "The Schumpeterian Trade-Offs Revisited", 1979	Box 1
Physical Description: 4 folders	

Notes for "The Schumpeterian Trade-Offs Revisited", 1977-1979	Box 1
Physical Description: 2 folders	
Winter and Nelson chapter drafts, 1978-1979	Box 1
Richard Nelson paper drafts, 1978 November	Box 1
Drafts and fragments of "Production Theory" paper, 1970s	Box 1
Notes and research on Schumpeterian competition and firm size distribution, 1970s	Box 1
Teaching photographs of Winter, 1970s	Box 1
Teaching photograph of Winter, 1970s	Oversize-folder 1
Correspondence, professional, 1970s-1990s	Box 1
Correspondence, personal, 1970s-1990s	Box 1
Notes on production theory and the nature of the firm, 1970s-1980s	Box 1
Drafts of "An Essay on the Theory of Production", 1980s	Box 1
An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change by Richard R. Nelson and Sidney G. Winter (paperback), 1982	Box 1
An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change by Richard R. Nelson and Sidney G. Winter (hardcover), 1982	Box 2
Workshop research and development, 1982-1986	Box 2
Research on patents, 1984	Box 2
Transamerica research seminar notes, 1986 October	Box 2
Report of the Research Briefing Panel on decision making and problem solving, 1986	Box 2

"Knowledge and Competence as Strategic Assets", 1987	Box 2
"Disagreement and Reform in Economic Science: Comments on Simon", 1988-1989	Box 2
"Patents in Complex Contexts", 1989	Box 2
"Survival, Selection, and Inheritance in Evolutionary Theories of Organization", 1990	Box 2
"Patents and Welfare in an Evolutionary Model", 1993	Box 2
"Organizing for Continuous Improvement", 1996	Box 2
An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change by Richard R. Nelson and Sidney G. Winter (Russian language edition), 2000	Box 2
"Specialised Perception, Selection, and Strategic Surprise", 2004	Box 2
An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change by Richard R. Nelson and Sidney G. Winter (Portuguese language edition - Brazil), 2006	Box 2
An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change by Richard R. Nelson and Sidney G. Winter (Japanese language edition), 2009	Box 3
An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change by Richard R. Nelson and Sidney G. Winter (Korean language edition), 2014	Box 3
Innovation and the Evolution of Industries: History-Friendly Models by Franco Malerba, Richard R. Nelson, Luigi Orsenigo, Sidney G. Winter, 2016	Box 3
"Pursuing the evolutionary agenda in economics and management research", 2017 April 17	Box 3