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Collection Summary

Repository: Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries

Creator: Spires, Elizabeth

Title: Elizabeth Spires Papers

Dates: 1971-2013

Quantity: 4.2 cubic feet (11 boxes)

Abstract: This collection consists of correspondence, audiovisual materials, manuscripts, and printed materials documenting the career of poet Elizabeth Spires.

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Biographical Note

Elizabeth Spires graduated from Vassar College in 1974. A noted poet, Spires has published eight collections of poems, including *Globe* (1981), *Swan's Island* (1997), and *A Memory of the Future* (2018). In addition, she has written two children's books, *The Mouse of Amherst* (2001) and *I Heard God Talking to Me: William Edmonton and His Stone Carvings* (2009), and edited *The Instant of Knowing: Lectures, Criticism and Occasional Prose*, by Josephine Jacobson (1997). As of 2025, Spires is professor of English and co-director of Kratz Center for Creative Writing at Goucher College, where she holds a Chair for Distinguished Achievement.

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Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of correspondence, audiovisual materials, manuscripts, and printed materials documenting the career of poet Elizabeth Spires. Of particular note are the audio cassettes on which are recorded Spires's 1978 interview with poet Elizabeth Bishop (Vassar Class of 1934), a transcription of which later appeared in *The Paris Review* (no. 80 [1981]).

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Access and Use

Access

This collection is open for research according to the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#) without any additional restrictions.

Restrictions on Use

Permission to quote (publish) from unpublished or previously published material must be obtained as described in the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#).
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Related Material

Related Material

- [The William Gifford Papers contains letters from Elizabeth Spires to William Gifford, with poems written by Spires at Vassar and annotated by Gifford.](#)

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Subject Headings

Names:

- Bishop, Elizabeth, 1911-1979

Organizations:

- Vassar College--Alumni and alumnae

Subjects:

- American poetry--20th century
- American poetry--21st century.
- Poets, American--20th century
- Poets, American--21st century
- Women poets--United States--20th century
- Women poets--United States--21st century

VCL Categories:

- Literature and Writing
- Vassar College

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Encoding Information

Encoded by Mark Seidl, May 2020. Updated, March 2022. Last updated, June 2025.

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Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Elizabeth Spires Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

Acquisition Information

Gift of Elizabeth Spires (VC 1974), 2012-2021. (M2012-008, M2013-008, M2021-008, M2021-009).

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Series List

[Series I. Writings \(Box 1-4\)](#)

This series includes undergraduate papers, published and unpublished poems, drafts of poems, lectures, informal talks, and introductions. Also included is Spires's M.A. thesis, "Globe," submitted to Johns Hopkins University in 1979. Drafts include multiple iterations of poems, many with handwritten annotations, arranged by title by Spires.

[Series II. Correspondence \(Box 5-8, 10\)](#)

This series contains letters to and from Spires, the bulk of which encompasses her long correspondence with Vassar College English professor William Gifford. Other correspondents include David Barber, Jill Bialosky, Elizabeth Bishop, Anthony Hecht, Josephine Jacobsen, Judith Kroll, Philip Levine, Howard Moss, John Frederick Nims, Ann Patchett, Melissa Range, Ken Rosen, Megan Sexton, and Richard Wilbur.

[Series III. Clippings \(Box 9-10\)](#)

This series includes clippings of reviews of Spires's publications, as well as book reviews written by Spires.

[Series IV. Photographic Prints \(Box 9\)](#)

The folder in this series contains professional and personal photographs of Spires.

[Series V. Printed Material \(Box 9-10\)](#)

This series contains promotional materials from symposia, readings, and other events in which Spires participated. Also included are uncorrected galleys and offprints of Spires's publications.

[Series VI. Audiovisual Material \(Box 11\)](#)

This series includes VHS, DVD, and audio cassette recordings of conferences, readings, and interviews.

Container List

Series I. WRITINGS

Academic papers

- Folder 1.1 M.A. Thesis, Globe, Poems submitted to Johns Hopkins University, 1979
Folders 1.2-1.4 Undergraduate papers, Vassar, Princeton, 1970-1974
Folder 1.5 Unpublished MS, Tree of Heaven, Sleepy Head, Red and Green Forever, undated

Published/Unpublished poems

- Folder 1.6 Miscellaneous poems, published/unpublished, 1990-2013
Folder 1.7 Miscellaneous poems, published, including student submissions to Spires, 1986-1987
Folder 1.8 Miscellaneous poetry by E.S., 1972-1977
Folders 1.9-1.12 Miscellaneous poems with notations, 1977-1992
Folder 1.13 Poetry set to music, Nancy Gunn, Gary Friedman, William Bradbury, 1994-1995
Folders 1.14-1.17 Vassar College submissions, with comments from Judith Kroll, William Gifford, 1972-1974

Poems, drafts

- Folder 2.1 A Life, undated
Folder 2.2 The Amiable Child, undated
Folder 2.3 Anamnesis (When We Meet Again), undated
Folder 2.4 Annonciade, undated
Folder 2.5 Badger Disguised as a Monk, undated
Folder 2.6 The Beds, undated
Folder 2.7 The Bells, undated
Folder 2.8 Black Fairytale, undated
Folder 2.9 The Celestial, undated
Folder 2.10 Cemetery Reef, undated
Folder 2.11 Coelacanth, undated
Folder 2.12 The Comb in the Mirror, undated
Folder 2.13 Curling Willow, undated
Folder 2.14 Elegy for Alex, undated
Folder 2.15 Essential Snail, undated
Folder 2.16 Fabergé's Egg, undated
Folder 2.17 The First Day, undated
Folder 2.18 Ghazal, undated
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Folder 2.20 Island Graveyard, undated
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Folder 2.27	A Memory of the Future, undated
Folder 2.28	Moment Vanishing, Côte d'Azur undated
Folder 3.1	Netsuke, undated
Folder 3.2	Now the Green Blade Rises, undated
Folder 3.3	Picture of a Soul, undated
Folder 3.4	Pome, undated
Folder 3.5	Primos, undated
Folder 3.6	Profil Perdu, undated
Folder 3.7	The Red Boomerang, undated
Folder 3.8	The Rehearsal, undated
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Folder 3.13	Snow, The Novel, undated
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Folder 3.15	The Sound of the Sea at the Shore; Like Water, undated
Folder 3.16	Starry Night, undated
Folder 3.17	Story of a Soul; Brown Bird, undated
Folder 3.18	Sunday Afternoon at Fulham Palace, undated
Folder 3.19	Sunday Morning at the Carmelite Monastery; Zazen, undated
Folder 3.20	Thanksgiving Night, undated
Folder 3.21	They Drive Through Childhood in Tiny Cars, undated
Folder 3.22	The Time Traveler, undated
Folder 3.23	To a Fog Spirit, undated
Folder 3.24	A Tomb; Half Lit, undated
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Folder 4.11	You have Flown to the Dangerous Country, undated

Talks

Folder 4.12	Anthony Hecht Felt and Mastered Pain, 2000 Apr
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Folder 4.13	On Elizabeth Bishop, Alice Tully Hall, 1997 Oct
Folder 4.14	Emily Dickinson, a Mouse, and Me, undated
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Folder 4.16	Encounters with Zen and What I've Learned from Japanese Art, Goucher College, undated
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Folder 4.20	The Triggering Voice, Gettysburg College, 2000 Sep
Folder 4.21	Visual Emotion, Imaginary Possession, Poetry of Marianne Moore, 1987 Feb
Folder 4.22	The Writer's Changing Voice, Sicily, Washington, D.C., undated
Folder 4.23	The Writing Process, Going Back to the Source, undated

Series II. CORRESPONDENCE

Folder 5.1	Acceptance letters of published work in Mademoiselle, Poetry, Antaeus, Miscellany, VA Quarterly Review, undated
Folder 5.2	Barber, David, The Atlantic Monthly, following publication of "The Wave Maker," undated
Folder 5.3	Bialosky, Jill, Spire's poetry editor, Norton, 2010, 2013
Folder 5.4	Cole, Henri, 1989-1994
Folder 5.5	Comstock, Rolland, 1991 Mar
Folder 5.6	Ford, Harry, Atheneum Publishers, Rejection of <i>The Daughter of Time</i> , undated
Folders 5.7-5.8	Jacobsen, Josephine, 1990-2002
Folder 5.9	Hecht, Anthony, 2000 Feb
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Folder 5.10	Kurtenbach, Elaine, Wesleyan University Press, approval of publication of <i>Globe</i> , undated
Folder 5.11	Levine, Phil, 1998 Feb
Folder 5.12	Meredith, William, CT College, publication of Crazy Quilt and Storyville Portrait, 1982 May
Folder 5.13	Moss, New Yorker, first acceptance of published work, Widow's Walk, 1976
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Folder 5.27	White House (Laura Bush) Poetry Symposium invite and subsequent cancellation, email from Russell Banks, 2003 Jan-Feb
Folder 5.28	Weaver, William, re Witter Bynner Poetry Prize, American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1998 Mar

- Folder 5.29 Wilbur, Richard, 1997 May
- Folders 6.1-6.21 to Gifford, William, 1976-2008
- Folders 7.1-7.9 to Gifford, William, 1976-2008
- Folders 7.10-7.12 to Gifford, William (re: Elizabeth Bishop research), 1982-1994
- Folder 8.1-8.15 from Gifford, William, 1973-2015
- Folder 8.16-8.23 from Bishop, Elizabeth, 1966-1979
- Letters from Bishop to Vassar administrators, including William Gifford, W.K. Rose, regarding Bishops' invitation to be Vassar's Phi Beta Kappa poet.

Series III. CLIPPINGS

- Folder 9.1 A Memory of the Future, reviews, 2018
- Folder 9.2 Annonciade, reviews, 1989-1993
- Folder 9.3 I Am Arachne, reviews, 2001
- Folder 9.4 I Heard God Talking to Me, reviews, 2001
- Folder 9.5 Globe, reviews, 1981-1985
- Folder 9.6 Kate's Light, reviews, 2021
- Folder 9.7 The Mouse of Amherst, reviews, 1999
- Folder 9.8 Now the Green Blade Rises, reviews 2002
- Folder 9.10 With One White; Ridge Road, reviews, 1995-1999
- Folder 9.11 Worldling, reviews, 1995-1996
- Folder 9.12 Book reviews written by E. Spires, American Poetry Review, New Criterion, Chicago Tribune, New York Times, 1987-2012
- Folders 10.1-10.2 Book reviews written by E. Spires, American Poetry Review, New Criterion, Chicago Tribune, New York Times, 1987-2012
- Folder 10.3 W.D. Snodgrass interview by E. Spires, American Poetry Review, 1990

Series IV. PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS

- Folder 9.13 Personal and professional photographs of Elizabeth Spires, 1979-1985

Series V. PRINTED MATERIAL

- Folder 9.14 Award, Ohioana Book Award, 1999
- Folder 10.6 Bishop, Elizabeth, reprints, interviews, articles, news clippings-collected by William Gifford, 1966-2001
- Map Case - Drawer 37 Broadside - "Brown Bird," The Beall Poetry Festival (signed), 2006
- Map Case - Drawer 37 Broadside - "The Celestial," Hatch Showprints, Nashville, TN (29/100), undated
- Map Case - Drawer 37 Broadside - Poetry in Motion, New York MTA, 1999 Jan 3
- Folder 9.15 Ghazal, Poetry for Students, Gale Group Study Guide offprint copy, 2014

Folder 9.16	Hollins Critic, In the Everlasting Present: the Poetry of Elizabeth Spires, 2002 Apr
Folder 9.17	Events, readings, symposia promotion, 1979-1999
Folder 9.18	Uncorrected galleys, Annonciade, 1989
Folder 9.19	Uncorrected galleys, I am Arachne, 2001
Folder 9.20	Uncorrected galleys, The Mouse of Amherst, 1999
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Series V. AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS

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Box 11	Easter Sunday 1955 poems read by Elizabeth Spires, 1996 Apr 1 (audio cassette)
Box 11	Gunn and Spires, songs, 1994 (3 audio cassettes)
Box 11	Howard County Poetry and Literature Society, Interviews by E.S. - Donald Hall, 2009 Oct 1 (DVD)
Box 11	Howard County Poetry and Literature Society, Interviews by E.S. - Philip Levine, 1998 Mar 1 (DVD)
Box 11	Howard County Poetry and Literature Society, Josephine Jacobsen Tribute with poets Lucille Clifton, Michael Collier, Elizabeth Spires, 2003 (VHS tape)
Box 11	Howard County Poetry and Literature Society, Michael Collier hosts Elizabeth Spires, 2002 Oct 1 (VHS tape)
Box 11	Intimations of Genius, Key West Literary Seminar, Alice Methfessel, 1993 (2 audio cassettes)
Box 11	Irregular resolutions, 5th Annual New Music Concert, 2009 Oct 1 (CD)
Box 11	NPR, All Things Considered, "On the Island," ready by Elizabeth Spires, 1995 Aug 1 (audio cassette)
Box 11	Omni Author to Author discussion, series host George Garrett, 1990 (VHS tape)
Box 11	The Great Sea, by Gary Friedman, based on a poem by Elizabeth Spires, 2000 Nov 1 (audio cassette)
Box 11	The Influence of Elizabeth Bishop, Key West Literary Seminar, 1993 (4 audio cassettes)
Box 11	Vassar poetry reading by Elizabeth Spires, 1996 Feb 1 (audio cassette)

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