

# Concordia University Libraries Special Collections

## Finding Aid - Johnny Holmes fonds (P016)

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Language of description: English

Concordia University Libraries Special Collections

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# Johnny Holmes fonds

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## Summary information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Concordia University Libraries Special Collections
<b>Title:</b>	Johnny Holmes fonds
<b>ID:</b>	P016
<b>Date:</b>	[194-]-1986 (date of creation)
<b>Physical description:</b>	3 m of textual records 175 sound recordings 90 photographs
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Dates of creation, revision and deletion:</b>	

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## Administrative history / Biographical sketch

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### Note

Johnny (John Joseph Harold) Holmes was born in Montreal June 8, 1916. He died June 11, 1989. He attended Maisonneuve School until he was 10 and then worked as an office boy for a shoe manufacturing company. As a youth he played a cornet his father bought him; at 14 he declined an offer to join the new Montreal Symphony Orchestra. He took a business course and worked for Anchor Cap and Closure as a secretary until 1943. He studied briefly with C. Van Camp, although his skills as instrumentalist and arranger were mostly self-taught. He played with his father and brother in a 22-piece band; there he met Edgar Braidí, viola player for the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, who showed him how to write arrangements.

In 1940 he co-founded a part-time, co-operative 10-piece dance band called the Esquires, in which he played lead trumpet. Assuming its leadership in 1941, he renamed it the Johnny Holmes Orchestra. It soon became the most popular big band of the day in Montreal, appearing at Victoria Hall each Saturday night from 1941 through 1951. He discovered many musicians: at various times Johnny Holmes Orchestra members included Maynard and Percy Ferguson, Bix Bélair, Nick Ayoub, Al Baculis, Bud Hayward, Art Morrow, and Oscar Peterson. Singers included Wally Aspler, Lorraine McAllister, Sheila Graham, and Mae Séguin. During the 1950s, after the birth of his daughter, he put his musical career on hold and worked as a salesman until 1960, when he returned to music part-time. In 1980 he began working full-time for CBC Radio. As band-leader he was involved in radio broadcasts including the Johnny Holmes Show, which was broadcast on Montreal CBC Radio between 1959 and 1969, and Broadway Holiday. Between 1966 and 1973 he made a number of recordings; he also produced others musicians' recordings until he retired in 1978. Holmes composed and arranged many musical pieces, including *The Fair City*, a jazz suite dedicated to Expo 67.

## Custodial history

The fonds was transferred from Concordia University's Records Management and Archives Department to Concordia University Libraries' Special Collections March 8-9, 2016, March 16-17, 2016, April 19-20, 2016, May 5, 2016, May 10, 2016, and May 18, 2016.

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## Scope and content

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The fonds provides information on jazz in Montreal, particularly on radio, during the 1950s and 1960s. The fonds contains music that Johnny Holmes arranged and conducted, audiotapes of CBC radio broadcasts, photographs of performers, and press clippings.

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## Notes

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### Title notes

- **Source of title proper:** Title based on the contents of the fonds.

### Immediate source of acquisition

The documents were donated to the Concordia University Archives by Johnny Holmes in 1986.

### Conditions governing use

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### Finding aids

Box listings are available.

### Accruals

No further accruals expected.

### Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published
- **Rights:** Copyright belongs to the creator(s).

## Access points

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- Textual record (documentary form)
- Graphic material (documentary form)
- Sound recording (documentary form)
- Jazz (subject)
- Radio Programs (subject)
- Montreal (place)

## Series descriptions

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Ref code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
P016-02-1	Item - Johnny Holmes with his king trumpet Photograph by Famous Studio, Montreal	1942		
P016-02-2	Item - Johnny Holmes with trumpet Photograph by Van Dyck Studios	ca. 1940		
P016-02-14	Item - Johnny Holmes and Oscar Peterson rehearsing at the Holmes apartment	1944		
P016-02-36	Item - The Johnny Holmes Orchestra on stage at Victoria Hall	ca. 1947		
P016-02-38	Item - The Johnny Holmes Orchestra on stage at Victoria Hall	ca. 1942		
P016-02-74	Item - Russ Dufort playing drums with the Johnny Holmes Band at Victoria Hall	1946		
P016-02-75	Item - Vocal group with the Johnny Holmes Band at Victoria Hall	ca. 1947		
P016-02-86	Item - The Johnny Holmes Band on stage at Victoria Hall	ca. 1943		