# International Missionary Union records10380330

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on March 03, 2026.
Description is written in: English.
Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary

3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Telephone: (212) 851-5606
burke@library.columbia.edu
URL: https://library.columbia.edu/locations/burke.html

## Table of Contents

Summary Information ..... 3
Biographical / Historical ..... 3
Scope and Contents ..... 4
Arrangement ..... 5
Administrative Information ..... 5
Related Materials ..... 6
Controlled Access Headings ..... 6
Burke Library record group: ..... 6
Collection Inventory ..... 6

## Summary Information


| | |
|---|---|
| **Repository:** | Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary |
| **Creator:** | International Missionary Union |
| **Title:** | International Missionary Union records |
| **ID:** | 10380330 |
| **Date [inclusive]:** | 1849 -- 1932 |
| **Physical Description:** | 3.25 linear feet 3.25 linear feet; 3 boxes |
| **Language of the Material:** | English |



**Abstract:** The International Missionary Union was an organization of international evangelical missions dedicated to diffusion of missionary intelligence, discussion of missionary topics, and increase of mutual acquaintance among missionaries of different churches and countries. The collection contains photographs, articles, member rolls, pamphlets, minutes and administrative records, correspondence, and one Syriac language journal.


**Preferred Citation**

Item description, MRL12: International Missionary Union records, 1849-1932, box #, folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

ˆ Return to Table of Contents

## Biographical / Historical

The International Missionary Union was an organization of international evangelical missions dedicated to diffusion of missionary intelligence, discussion of missionary topics, and increase of mutual acquaintance among missionaries of different churches and countries. Founded in 1884 in Niagara Falls, Ontario Canada, it was the brainchild of Rev. W.B. Osborn, pastor of a local Niagara Falls Church and former missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church in India. The Rev. John T. Gracey, D.D., also a former missionary in India, organized the first week of missionary meetings at Rev. Osborn's request; annual meetings of the IMU evolved from the initial assemblies. The IMU was dedicated to fostering dialogues with other

Christian missionaries and churches worldwide. The Rev. William H. Belden, Secretary of the Union in 1890, noted that the Union was not affiliated with any specific denomination, did not elect delegates, and was independent of other missionary organizations. Its sole purpose was for international Christian missionaries to exchange ideas and experiences in order to enhance and expand their own missions and provide support to fellow missionaries in the context of their work. The diffusion of missionary information and the cultivating of relationships among missionaries serving in different countries and representing different churches was one of the principal objectives of the International Missionary Union. In 1890, the International Missionary Union found a permanent home for its annual meetings thanks to the generosity of Dr. Henry Foster of Clifton Springs, N.Y. Foster, known for his dedication to The Clifton Springs Sanitarium and his fervent belief that he had been visited by the Holy Spirit, in 1891 provided the Deed of Trust to The International Missionary Union, and also provided lodging for the missionaries at the Clifton Springs Sanitarium, a facility he owned. The sanitarium continued to host the IMU meetings throughout its existence except for two instances. The dissolution of the IMU resulted from the development of other specialized missionary organizations focusing on topics such as agriculture, medicine, and education; the financial hardships created by the Great Depression; and the increasing awareness of the need for academic development of international missionaries. On April 7, 1932, the six-member Board of Control of the International Missionary Union agreed to dissolve the organization effective December 31, 1932. The funds, records, and other artifacts of the IMU were passed over to the Foreign Missions Conference of North America.

ˆ Return to Table of Contents

## Scope and Contents

This collection contains photographs, articles, member rolls, pamphlets, minutes and administrative records, correspondence, and one Syriac language journal relating to the International Missionary Union. Many of the photographs depict members at Clifton Springs, New York during the organization's annual meetings; the bulk of the group photographs in this collection were taken on the steps of the Sanitarium. Some newspaper articles are from Latin American countries (in Spanish); also included is an article from the New York Times regarding U.S. actions in Nicaragua and Honduras. Administrative records include minutes of the meetings of The Board of Control of the International Missionary Union, as well as the Deed of Trust from Henry Foster and Mary E. Foster to "The Clifton Springs Sanitarium Company" (July 9, 1891) and the original handwritten Constitution of the IMU.

ˆ Return to Table of Contents

## Arrangement

This collection is unarranged.

ˆ Return to Table of Contents

## Administrative Information

### Publication Statement

Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary

3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Telephone: (212) 851-5606
burke@library.columbia.edu
URL: https://library.columbia.edu/locations/burke.html

### Revision Description

PDF converted to EAD and description updated by Leah Edelman. 2021-08-10

### Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Formerly part of the independent Missionary Research Library (MRL), these records were accessioned by the Burke Library at the time of the MRL's closure in 1976.

### Processing Information

Materials were placed in new acid free folders and boxes. Three-ring binders that contained member rolls, photographs, annual meeting minutes and the Constitution were placed in new acid free folders and removed from the three-ring containers. The finding aid was created by Jazmin Mooney and Brigette Kamsler in 2013 with the support of the Henry Luce Foundation, and edited by Leah Edelman in 2021.

### Conditions Governing Use

Some material in this collection may be protected by copyright and other rights. Information concerning copyright, fair use, and reproduction requests can be consulted at Columbia's Copyright Advisory Office.

ˆ Return to Table of Contents

## Related Materials

### Related Materials

Records of the International Missionary Union, HR1249. Yale University Divinity Special Collections.

ˆ Return to Table of Contents

## Controlled Access Headings

- International Missionary Union

## Burke Library record group:

Missionary Research Library Archives: MRL12, Ecumenical/World Mission

ˆ Return to Table of Contents

## Collection Inventory

| Title/Description | Instances |
|---|---|
| Photographs, 1896 -- 1908 | box 1OS |
| Photographs, circa 1920 -- 1929 | box 2OS |
| Newspaper articles, circa 1900 -- 1932 | box 2OS |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Christrosen pamphlet, circa 1900 -- 1932 | box 2OS | |
| Syriac language journal, 1849 | box 2OS | |
| Photographs, circa 1890 -- 1899 | box 3 | folder 1 |
| Photograph, 1895 | box 3 | folder 2 |
| Correspondence, 1924 | box 3 | folder 3 |
| Newspaper article, 1924 | box 3 | folder 4 |
| Administrative records, 1886 -- 1927 | box 3 | folder 5 |
| Administrative records and photographs, 1920 -- 1932 | box 3 | folder 6 |