

Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections
University of South Carolina Libraries

**Jack De Bellis Collection of John Updike,
1976-2008
Collection: 2016:3**

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Jack De Bellis Collection of John Updike, 1976-2008

Collection Number: 2016:3

Creator: Jack A. De Bellis

Extent: 2 Boxes

Administrative Information:

Provenance: Gift/Purchase, 2016

Processed by: William Mancke

Access Restrictions: Open to research.

Preferred Citation: [Item], Jack A. De Bellis Collection of John Updike, Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of South Carolina Libraries

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Scope and Content Notes

John Updike (1932-2009), was an American novelist, short story writer, poet, and critical writer. He is considered to be one of the most accomplished American writers of the 20th century, praised for both his prose and poetry. His rich, fluid writing style appeals not only to readers but to other authors as well. Updike's themes include Christian theology, American identity, and human sexuality. His most popular work, the *Rabbit* series, was written over the span of forty years. Updike is represented in this collection as an often hesitant party to De Bellis' book collecting and writing ambitions. He obliges De Bellis in most requests and the correspondence documents the development of their relationship. John Updike died on January 27, 2009, only three months after the final letter in this collection was written.

Jack A. De Bellis, PhD and professor emeritus at Lehigh University, specializes in 20th century American poetry and Southern literature. De Bellis has amassed one of the most extensive collections of John Updike books, including many rare foreign printings.

This collection is comprised of professional correspondence between John Updike (1932-2009) and Jack A. De Bellis (author of *The Updike Encyclopedia* and *John Updike: a Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Materials*) beginning with De Bellis' initial contact with Updike on December 1976 through Updike's final communication dated "Thanksgiving 2008". The collection maintains the order established by the collector (De Bellis) and is sorted by date. Correspondence by Updike is in its original format, typewritten and handwritten, often in the form of postcards and post-it notes, while correspondence by De Bellis is presented as transcriptions of originals except for instances in which Updike annotated and returned De Bellis' original correspondence. This collection also includes Updike family Christmas cards including selections of Updike's poetry printed exclusively for use by the Updike family.

Though De Bellis initially contacted Updike in 1976 to request his consent to use his works in a visual poetry display, the two developed a personal and professional relationship that extended over the following three decades. Professionally, their exchanges include Updike's contributions, copyedits, and complaints about De Bellis' two Updike books and De Bellis' questions about Updike's biography as well as notes on typographical and content errors in Updike's published works. Personally, the correspondence includes biographical and details about both authors' daily lives and schedules. Updike and De Bellis maintained a constant exchange of rare and foreign Updike titles, some of which De Bellis would ask Updike to sign. This arrangement, including Updike's repeated complaints about packing boxes and visits to the post office, runs as a theme through the entire collection.

Related Material

Donald J. and Ellen Greiner Collection of John Updike

Contents	Box
Series I: Correspondence	1-2

Series I: Correspondence

Box 1

1976-1977
1986-1989
1990-1992
1993-1994
1995-1996
1997
1998
1999
2000

Box 2

2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008