

Chicago and Midwestern Writers

By 1920, Chicago had become “the literary capital of the United States,” according to one of the nation’s influential cultural arbiters, H. L. Mencken. Indeed, American literature of the period bore an aesthetic shaped by a palpable confrontation with the city’s railroads, skyscrapers, and stockyards. Chicago helped produce many of the most important writers of the era, from Theodore Dreiser and Carl Sandburg to Willa Cather and Sherwood Anderson. Many started as journalists for Chicago newspapers, which were famous for breeding sharp, recognizable voices.

The Newberry has compiled a rich collection of manuscripts, photographs, printed materials, periodicals, and ephemera related to Chicago and Midwestern writers. The collection includes materials from the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, through the Black Renaissance of the 1930s and 1940s, and to the present.

See [Modern Manuscript Collections](#) for finding aids for Chicago journalists, book designers, printers, theaters, family papers, clubs, and arts organizations.

Finding aids for these following writers and others can be found in the Literature section of Modern Manuscripts:

[Nelson Algren](#)

[Sherwood Anderson](#)

[Fanny Butcher](#)

[Jack Conroy](#)

[Malcolm Cowley](#)

[Mitchell Dawson](#)

[Floyd Dell](#)

[Finley Peter Dunne](#)

[James T. Farrell](#)

[Henry Blake Fuller](#)

[Harry Hansen](#)

[Ben Hecht](#)

[Ernest Hemingway](#)

[D’Arcy McNickle](#)

[Arthur Meeker](#)

[Audrey Niffenegger](#)

[William Morton Payne](#)

[Eunice Tietjens](#)