



**FINDING AID TO THE
DENNIS J. MCKENNA PAPERS, 1943-2016**

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Processed by: Lauren N. Haslem, February 2017
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Descriptive Summary

Creator Information	McKenna, Dennis J., 1950 -
Title	Dennis J. McKenna papers
Collection Identifier	MSP 213
Date Span	1943-2016
Abstract	The Dennis J. McKenna papers contain unpublished manuscripts, field reports, journals of personal reflections, photographs, correspondence, and word processing files pertaining to Dennis and Terence McKenna's intellectual and research interests.
Extent	2.5 cubic feet (5 document boxes) and 1,401.2 MB of digital materials
Finding Aid Author	Lauren N. Haslem, February 2017
Languages	English
Repository	Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University Libraries

Administrative Information

Location Information:	ASC
Access Restrictions:	Collection is open for research. Electronic records in this collection have been migrated to an archives server and digital use copies can only be accessed onsite in the Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center. Some files may require additional processing and may not be immediately accessible via modern operating systems and programs. Please request digital records prior to arriving at the Research Center.
Acquisition Information:	Multiple donations by Dennis J. McKenna: April 26, 2013; January 31, 2016
Accession Number:	20130426.1 20130131

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Subjects and Genres

Persons

McKenna, Dennis J., 1950-
McKenna, Terence K., 1946-

Topics

Eschatology.
Shamanism.
Psilocybin.
Psychoactive Substances Research Collection at Purdue University.
Hallucinogens—experience reports

Occupations

Ethnopharmacology.
Ethnobotany.

Biography of Dennis J. McKenna

Dennis Jon McKenna was born on December 17, 1950 in Paonia, Colorado. He received a B.A. in biology from the University of Colorado in 1973, an M.A. in botany from the University of Hawaii in 1979, and a Ph.D. in botanical sciences from the University of British Columbia in 1984. Dennis received post-doctoral research fellowships in the Laboratory of Clinical Pharmacology at the National Institute of Mental Health and in the Department of Neurology at Stanford University School of Medicine. He joined Shaman Pharmaceuticals as Director of Ethnopharmacology in 1990 and relocated to Minnesota in 1993 to join the Aveda Corporation as Senior Research Pharmacognosist. In 2001, Dennis joined the faculty of the Center for Spirituality and Healing at the University of Minnesota. Dennis was a key organizer and participant in the Hoasca Project, an international biomedical study of ayahuasca used by indigenous people and syncretic religious groups in Brazil. He is also a founding board member of the Heffter Research Institute and serves on the advisory board of non-profit organizations in the fields of ethnobotany and botanical medicines. At Heffter, he continues his focus on the therapeutic uses of psychoactive medicines derived from nature and used in indigenous ethnomedical practices. Dennis is author or co-author on over forty scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals. His publications have appeared in the Journal of Ethnopharmacology, European Journal of Pharmacology, Brain Research, Journal of Neuroscience, Journal of Neurochemistry, Economic Botany, Alternative and Complementary Therapies, and elsewhere.

Terence Kemp McKenna, Dennis's older brother and psychedelic author, is another significant figure in this collection. Terence was born on November 16, 1946 in Paonia, Colorado. He studied history at U.C. Berkeley in 1965 and later enrolled at the Tussman Experimental College. After completing the College's two-year program, Terence withdrew from the University of California, though he maintained his position as a laboratory assistant in the Entomology Department, where he prepared insect specimens for the collection of the California Insect Survey. From October 1967 to March 1968, Terence travelled widely in Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. Upon his return to the US, Terence worked as a gardener and sold fabrics and trinkets that he acquired abroad. He returned to India in 1969, seeking to study Tibetan languages and religion. Terence supported himself by collecting and selling specimens of exotic butterflies to buyers in Singapore and America. In 1970, he moved to Japan, where he worked as an English teacher. Upon hearing of his mother's illness, Terence moved to Vancouver, where he found employment as a restaurant worker. Following his mother's death, he moved to Colombia, where Terence and Dennis later performed "the experiment at La Chorrera."

In 1971, Dennis and Terence traveled to La Chorrera, the ancestral home of the Witoto people in the Colombian Amazon, in search of *oo-koo-hé*, a DMT-containing plant. Companion researchers accompanied the brothers, and the group was collectively known as the Brotherhood of the Screaming Abyss. The experiment occurred on March 4, wherein Dennis and Terence consumed a brew of plant

hallucinogens, aiming to fabricate an artifact that would be the fusion of mind and matter. The brothers recounted the details of what happened in La Chorrera in their 1975 book *The Invisible Landscape*. Terence wrote about his experience more directly in his 1993 book *True Hallucinations*. Likewise, Dennis published a more extensive account in 2012 under the title *The Brotherhood of the Screaming Abyss: My Life with Terence McKenna*.

In 1975, Terence graduated from Berkeley with a B.S. in Conservation of Natural Resources. In 1976, Terence and Dennis pseudonymously published one of the earliest psilocybin mushroom growing guides under the names O.T. Oss and O.N. Oeric. In 1985, Terence co-founded the non-profit Botanical Dimensions, with his then-wife Kathleen Harrison-McKenna. The organization aimed to collect and propagate medicinal and shamanic plants and fungi from around the world. Throughout the 1990s, Terence wrote and lectured widely about shamanism, ethnopharmacology, and plant hallucinogens. He spent the last few years of his life in Hawaii and died of brain cancer in 2000 at the age of 53.

Sources:

- Materials within the collection.
- Heffter Research Institute webpage: <http://heffter.org/>
- Erowid character vault on Terence McKenna: https://www.erowid.org/culture/characters/mckenna_terence
- Tao Lin, "Dennis and Terence McKenna: Parts of an Intellectual Dyad," *Vice*, 3 September 2014: https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/dennis-and-terence-mckenna-parts-of-an-intellectual-dyad-902

Collection Description

Scope

The Dennis J. McKenna papers (1943-2016; 2.5 cubic feet) document the lives and intellectual pursuits of Dennis J. McKenna and Terence K. McKenna. Subjects include shamanism, eschatology, and plant hallucinogens. The collection includes but is not limited to unpublished manuscripts, field reports, journals of personal reflections, term papers, correspondence, photographs, and article reprints. As much as the materials in this collection reflect the McKenna's scientific and technical training, so too do they capture their philosophical beliefs about the mysteries of time, reality, and existence. Donated in multiple accessions over several years, the McKenna papers are organized into five series.

Arrangement

The Dennis J. McKenna papers have been arranged into five series.

1. Dennis J. McKenna Materials, 1968-2016 (0.75 cubic feet)

This series contains material written by and pertaining to the life and intellectual pursuits of Dennis McKenna. Holdings include field reports and collecting notebooks, manuscript drafts, journals of poems and personal reflections, high school and college term papers, correspondence, an experience report, biographical clippings, publications, and word processing files. Subjects include shamanism, eschatology, psilocybin, ayahuasca, and the McKenna's research expedition to La Chorrera. Materials in the series are arranged chronologically.

2. Terence K. McKenna Materials, 1965-2000 (0.75 cubic feet)

This series contains material written by and related to the intellectual pursuits of Terence McKenna. Holdings include manuscripts, field notes, journals of personal reflections, software and a user manual, book chapter outlines, biographical clippings, correspondence, and obituaries. Subjects include psilocybin, shamanism, mysticism, the McKenna's research expedition to La Chorrera, Terence's Timewave Zero theory, and Terence's death. Materials in the series are arranged chronologically.

3. Photographs and Slides, 1943-2012 (0.50 cubic feet)

This series contains photographs, slides, and digital images that relate to the McKenna's lives, most of which document their family and research expeditions in South America. Personal subjects include Dennis and Terence as children, as well as portraits and candid photos of their parents, spouses, children, and extended family. Professional subjects include their travels to Iquitos, Peru, Manaus, Brazil, and La Chorrera in the Colombian Amazon. South America's landscape, plant hallucinogens, hallucinogenic treatment preparation (e.g. ayahuasca and psilocybin), and persons undergoing treatment are all documented. Materials in this series are arranged chronologically.

See also Box OS S for an 11"x14" photograph of Terence McKenna, taken by Dean Chamberlain in 1999. See Series 1, Boxes 11 and 12 for additional photographs related to Dennis McKenna's personal life.

4. Books and Manuscripts, 1972-2000 (0.25 cubic feet)

This series contains books and manuscripts authored by and gifted to the McKenna brothers. Included is a 1972 manuscript entitled "Shamanistic Investigations." This is a draft of the 1975 book *Invisible Landscape: Mind, Hallucinogens, and the I Ching*, which was co-authored by Dennis and Terence. Also included is a 1976 collection of poems by William Patrick Watson, entitled "Amazonas." Subjects include the Amazon, indigenous traditions, and spiritual awakening. Also included is a 1985 booklet of eight articles written by pseudonymous writers Gracie and Zarkov. Subjects include shamanistic techniques, 2C-B, DMT, tryptamine, indole psychedelics, and MAO inhibitors. Also included is Steve Venright's book *Spiral Agitator*, which was published in 2000. Many of the items in this series are accompanied by letters from the authors, addressed to one or both of the McKenna brothers. Materials in the series are arranged chronologically.

5. Miscellaneous Materials, 1994-2011 (0.25 cubic feet)

This series contains materials that are not representative of any of the series in his collection. Holdings include sheet music, haikus, partial manuscripts, program pamphlets, a business card, advertisements, and an obituary. Subjects include the Esalen Institute, the extraterrestrial origin of hallucinogens, psilocybin, Lois McKenna, and the Boy Scouts. Materials in this series are arranged chronologically, when possible.

Descriptive Rules Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd Edition
Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Processing Information

All materials have been placed in archival housing. Whenever possible, original order of the materials has been retained.

Electronic materials have been kept in their original locations but are still undergoing archival processing as of February 2017. For more information, please consult a reference archivist.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Series 1. Dennis J. McKenna Material, 1968-2016

(0.75 cubic foot)

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
1	1	High school and college term papers, circa late 1960s-1970s “Electronics and evolution” semester report, undated “Journey to Phoenix on the bus to see Andrés Segovia” term paper, undated “Entropy” term paper, undated “Human intelligence” term paper, undated “Steady state cosmology” term paper, undated “Demise of mechanism” term paper, undated “On a holographic theory of mind” term paper, undated “On a holographic theory of mind” term paper (copy), undated “Voodoo” field report, undated “Teleology” term paper, undated “Speculations on the philosophy of science” term paper, undated “A theoretical trans-temporal macrocosm” term paper, undated “Monadological matrices” term paper, undated “Three essays on organismic philosophy” term paper, undated Review of <i>The Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China</i> , undated Review of <i>Shamanism: The Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy</i> , undated Vocabulary list, undated
1	2	Steno book of poems, circa 1970s
1	3	Psychedelic experience report, 1971
1	4	“Shamanistic alchemy studies” steno notebook, 1971
1	5	“Quantifying the Eschatron” manuscript and letter, 1972
1	6	<i>The Invisible Landscape</i> chapter five draft, circa 1975
1	7	“Amazon-Pebas expedition” collecting notebook, 1981
1	8	<i>True Hallucinations</i> notes, circa 1993
1	9	“Fractionation separation technology” reports and infographics, 1994
1	10	“Approaching the end of life” pamphlet and notes, circa 2000
1	11	Clippings about Dennis McKenna, 2001
1	12	Correspondence to Dennis, 1 of 2, 1976-2013

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
	1	Correspondence to Dennis, 2 of 2, undated
2	2	Journal of personal reflections, circa 1960s-1980s
2	3	Artwork, 2000
2	4	Passports and driver's licenses, 1979-2016
2	5	Address book, undated
2	6	Dennis McKenna's publications, 1980s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The simple beta-carboline alkaloids," 1980 "Ultra-violet mediated cytotoxic activity of beta-carboline alkaloids," 1980 "DMT and human consciousness," 1981 "Biochemistry and pharmacology of tryptamines and beta-carbolines a minireview," 1984 "Monoamine oxidase inhibitors in south American hallucinogenic plants," 1984 "Monoamine oxidase inhibitors in south American hallucinogenic plants part 2," 1984 "On the comparative ethnopharmacology of malpighiaceae and myristicaceae hallucinogens," 1985 "Autoradiographic localization of binding sites for ¹²⁵I-DOI, a new psychotomimetic radioligand, in the rat brain," 1987 "It's a jungle out there," 1989 "Common receptors for hallucinogens in rat brain," 1989 "Differentiation of 5-hydroxytryptamine₂ receptor subtypes using ¹²⁵I-R-(—)2,5-Dimethoxy-4-iodophenylisopropylamine and ³H-Ketanserin," 1989 "Chronic treatment with (±) DOI, a psychotomimetic 5-HT₂ agonist, downregulates 5-HT₂ receptors in rat brain," 1989
2	7	Dennis McKenna's publications, 1990s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Differential interactions of indolealkylamines with 5-hydroxytryptamine receptor subtypes," 1990 "Neurochemistry and neurotoxicity of 3,4-Methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDMA, "Ecstasy"), 1990 "Review of "The Healing Forest"," in <i>Plant Med.</i>, 1991 "Review of "The Healing Forest"," in <i>Shaman's Drum</i>, 1991 3,4-Methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDA) analogues exhibit differential effects on synaptosomal release of ³H-Dopamine and ³H-5-Hydroxytryptamine," 1991

“Snuff powders from pre-hispanic San Pedro de Atacama,” 1991
 “DMT: Nature’s ubiquitous hallucinogen,” 1992
 “Tryptamine hallucinogens of the new world,” 1992
 “Binding potency of paroxetine analogues for the 5-Hydroxytryptamine uptake complex,” 1992
 “Platelet serotonin uptake sites increased in drinkers of ayahuasca,” 1994
 “Bitter brews and other abominations,” 1995
 “Biodynamic constituents in ayahuasca admixture plants,” 1995
 “Quantitation of *N,N*-Dimethyltryptamine and harmala alkaloids in human plasma after oral dosing with ayahuasca,” 1996
 “Human psychopharmacology of hoasca, a plant hallucinogen used in ritual context Brazil,” 1996
 “Plant hallucinogens,” 1996
 “An unusual experience with “Hoasca”—A lesson from the teacher,” 1998
 “The scientific investigation of ayahuasca,” 1998
 “Neurochemistry of psychedelic drugs,” 1998
 “Morphological, phytochemical, and genetic variation in Hawaiian cultivars of ‘Awa,” 1999
 “Ayahuasca,” 1999
 “Pharmacokinetics of *Hoasca* alkaloids in healthy humans,” 1999
 2 8 Dennis McKenna’s publications, 2000s
 “Clinical investigations of the therapeutic potential of ayahuasca,” 2004
 “Ayahuasca and human destiny,” 2005
 “The healing vine,” circa 2006
 “A demand for clarity regarding a case report in the ingestion of 5-Methoxy-*N,N*-Dimethyltryptamine (5-MeO-DMT) in an ayahuasca preparation,” 2006
 “Statement on ayahuasca,” 2012
 “A possibly sigma-1 receptor mediated role on dimethyltryptamine in tissue protection, regeneration, and immunity,” 2013
 CD (700 MB) of publications, 2001-2016

Series 2. Terence K. McKenna Material, 1965-2000

(0.75 cubic feet)

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
2	9	High school graduation program, 1965
2	10	"The future of magic in electronic societies" manuscript, circa late 1960s
2	11	"A preliminary report on an experiment at La Chorrera" manuscript, circa 1971

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
3	1	Correspondence and autobiographical material, 1971-1983
3	2	"Down to earth: psilocybin and the UFOs" manuscript, 1977
3	3	"Down to earth: psilocybin and the UFOs" manuscript, 1979
3	4	Passport, 1983
3	5	"Timewave zero" software (1.2 MB) and user manual, 1987
3	6	"Timewave zero" notes and graphs, 1987-1990
3	7	"Change and becoming: studies in a fourth dimensional phenomenology of mind" field notes, circa 1971
3	8	<i>True Hallucinations</i> chapter outlines, circa 1993
3	9	Clippings about Terence McKenna, 1993-2000
3	10	Obituaries and written tributes, 2000

Series 3. Photographs and Slides, 1943-2012

(0.50 cubic feet)

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
4	1	McKenna family photographs and slides, 1 of 5, 1943
4	2	McKenna family photographs and slides, 2 of 5, undated
4	3	McKenna family photographs and slides, 3 of 5, 1946-1964
4	4	McKenna family photographs and slides, 4 of 5, circa 1950s
4	5	McKenna family photographs and slides, 5 of 5, circa 1970s-1980s
4	6	Colombian Amazon study photographs, circa 1970s
4	7	Iquitos study photographs and slides, 1981-1993 CD (700 MB) of Iquitos study photographs, 2012
4	8	UDV Ayahuasca study photographs, 1993

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
OS S	8	Photograph of Terence McKenna by Dean Chamberlain, 11"x14", 1999

Series 4. Books and Manuscripts, 1972-2000

(0.25 cubic feet)

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
5	1	Terence and Dennis McKenna, "Shamanistic Investigations" manuscript, 1972
5	2	William Patrick Watson, "Amazonas," 1976 Poem from W. Watson to T. McKenna, undated
5	3	Gracie and Zarkov, "Notes from underground," 1985
5	4	Steve Venright, <i>Spiral Agitator</i> , 2000 Note from Steve Venright to Dennis McKenna, 2000

Series 5. Miscellaneous Materials, 1994-2011

(0.25 cubic feet)

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
5	5	Pamphlets, clippings, and notes, 1994-2011