

FORT WORTH PUBLIC LIBRARY RECEIVES RADIO SHACK RECORDS

Submitted by Tom Kellam • Fort Worth Public Library



The Fort Worth Public Library's Genealogy, History and Archives Unit recently acquired a valuable addition to its archival collections: the records of the Radio Shack Corporation. Angie Fares, Radio Shack's Director of Corporate Records and Information offered the collection to the Library in August 2007. Ms. Fares and other Radio Shack executives determined that this large and complex collection needed a new home, and they thought of the Library, "since Radio Shack was such a large part of Fort Worth's history." The Library agreed and gratefully accepted the collection.

The Radio Shack Corporate Records cover the history of the company from its early beginnings with Allied Radio and The Tandy Leather Company in the 1920s. These records also reflect Fort Worth history, as well as the history of the consumer electronics industry and the development of the personal computer. This collection is therefore valuable for our regional history and has national importance as well. The scrapbooks, press releases, *Intercom* articles and other records in this collection provide rich source of information on how Charles Tandy led the company's expansion from a foundering chain for a few stores based in Boston in 1963 to a national electronics giant by the late 1970s.¹

This collection is in excellent physical condition, and has been well maintained and organized. Ms. Fares happens to be an accomplished archivist as well as a records manager. The Radio Shack papers arrived completely processed, in acid free containers, complete with a detailed finding aid.

The first shipment, consisting of 117 feet of records including scrapbooks, company publications, catalogs, press releases, and some photographs, arrived on November 13, 2007.



Store opening 1961, Saugus, MA.

- The scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings and other documents relating to Radio Shack company history, but some are exclusively devoted to events in Fort Worth.
- Company publications include catalogs going back to the 1920s. The earliest catalog is from Allied Radio, a company Radio Shack acquired in 1970.
- Several years of *Intercom*, Radio Shack's in-house magazine, is also included. Such corporate publications are always useful resources for local historians and scholars.
- Press releases from the 1970s to the 1990s provide an overview of the company's growth, development, and business strategies.



Above:
Allied Radio,
1920s, Boston.

Future material will include records relating to:

- The development of the computer industry, including some correspondence with Bill Gates;
- Material relating to the M&O Subway, which the company took over from Leonard Brothers and maintained for many years;
- Tandy family scrapbooks, correspondence and memorabilia.

Radio Shack is still in the process of moving the rest of the collection to the Library and hopes to finish by the end of this year.

¹ For more information on Charles Tandy and the history of Radio Shack, see *Tandy's Money Machine* by Irvin Farman (Chicago: The Mobium Press, 1992).



Left:
Listening
room, 1960s.