



Archives and History Office Program Review Committee

1999 Report

SLAC Archives and History Office Advisory Committee

The committee possessed broad expertise in archiving and record management. The members had experience in a variety of institutions including universities, national laboratories and scientific societies. This is the first review of the Archives program; it is expected that this will be repeated annually until the program has been fully reviewed and set on course.

The Members of the Archives Review Committee were:

- R. Joseph Anderson, AIP, Center for the History of Physics
- Professor Richard Blankenbecler, SLAC, Chair
- Professor David Hitlin, California Institute of Technology
- Jerry Jobe, SLAC, Business Services Division
- David Gaynon, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Records and Archives Management
- Margaret Kimball, Stanford University, Archives
- Professor Jessica Wang, UCLA, History Department

Charge to the Committee

The SLAC Archives and History Office Advisory Committee is a standing committee charged with advising the Associate Director of the Research Division of SLAC on the goals, policies, and activities of the SLAC Archives and History Program. While the Advisory Committee's emphasis may change over time, its initial effort will include the following areas:

- Review the current archives and history program and assess how well it is fulfilling its mission and meeting DOE requirements.
- Evaluate SLAC's near-term archival needs and recommend changes.
- Evaluate SLAC's longer-term (8-10 year) needs and strategy.
- Review and comment on the Office's mission, goals, policies, and activities.
- Prepare a report on these points and any other subject which may arise during the Committee's deliberations.

The SLAC Archives and History Office is part of the Technical Information Services (TIS) which reports to the Associate Director of Research. TIS's mission is to support and enhance research and scholarly communication and includes the Archives Office, the HEP Databases, the Library, Technical Publications, and the SLAC Web Information Manager. The TIS

Director, Pat Kreitz, is SLAC's (DOE-mandated) Scientific and Technical Information Officer, responsible for ensuring the prudent management and maximum accessibility of SLAC's scientific, intellectual and historical information.

The SLAC Archives Review Committee met for 1 and 1/2 days on 4/23/99 and 4/24/99. Jean Deken, the Head Archivist at SLAC, and Patricia Kreitz, the head of TIS, spoke to the committee on the archival program, its operations and operating procedures during the first day. These presentations well represented the achievements of the group. They covered the ongoing effort and were well planned, thorough, clearly presented, and extensive. In addition, reports by Karen Kruger on SLAC records management, and by Joe Anderson of AIP on a study of High Energy Physics Records were given. The second day started with the committee meeting with the presenters to clarify questions that arose, and ended with an executive session in which the recommendations for the committee report were formulated and discussed.

Overall Appraisal

The committee praised the effort to preserve and make available the scientific history of SLAC. The committee was unanimously complimentary of the program and the laboratory for its support of this program. One archivist on the committee stated the lab was a leader and an example of how other labs should archive their history. Overall, the SLAC effort is a very strong program.

This annual review process can offer the opportunity to refine the program and to establish a clear sense of priorities which the SLAC management and the archive staff can share.

In the opinion of the committee, the SLAC archive program is first rate. With limited resources and a broad charge, the archive staff has managed to mount an effort that has not only been responsive to the needs of the Laboratory but has established a position of leadership in the archival community and particularly within the DOE.

The Archives and History Office (AHO) is to be commended for the excellent job they have done in defending their mission, integrating their work with other efforts in Technical Information Services (TIS), and, with limited resources, making a significant impact on a long-standing problem in a very short time.

Jean Deken is particularly to be commended for her accomplishments and the effective approach she has brought to the task. Jean Deken and Pat Kreitz are to be congratulated for their excellent work, for defining issues, and setting out problems, questions, issues for the future and for defining the goals of the archive effort.

The early discussion and agreement on the procedures to be used to archive the BABAR experiment was worthy of special praise. Indeed, the AIP representative said this was an example to the world and may be the basis for an academic study all by itself.

As it appears unlikely that the level of resources provided by the Lab to Archives can be increased, it is important that there be a clear understanding of the core functions of this group and then a clear setting of priorities within these functions. Under these restrictions, it was a clear consensus among the committee that a readjustment of the time and effort spent by the Archivist on various tasks must be made consistent with these priorities.

Priorities

The mission of the SLAC Archives is defined as providing SLAC with a reliable, accessible, and dynamic institutional memory that captures its scientific history while meeting DOE/NARA contract requirements.

The core work of an archive falls into four areas: Finding and Appraising, Organizing, Assisting Users, and Providing Intellectual Capital. A reasonable distribution of time, in Jean Deken's judgment, is that the Archive staff's time should be equally divided amongst these four activities. The SLAC AHO's functions and proportion of time currently spent on each and the committees strong recommendations are:

Current Allocation

- Assist:.....50%
- Organize:.....30%
- Find and Appraise:..15%
- Provide Capital:.....5%

Recommended Allocation

- Assist:.....25%
- Organize:.....25%
- Find and Appraise:....25%
- Provide Capital:.....25%

Recommendations:

Because of the significant backlog of valuable scientific activity at SLAC which has not been properly identified and organized, the Committee feels strongly that for the near-term, at least, the priority given to the four functions should change. The **first priority** of the Archives needs to be the **collection and preservation** of records that document SLAC's history. **The preservation of materials through accession is the most important function of the Archivist at this time.**

The Committee recommends that the responsibilities of the Archives Program at its present stage of maturity be divided into two groups, with the primary responsibilities taking the majority of the AHO staff time and the secondary responsibilities taking less time.

The Primary responsibilities of the Archive Program at its present stage of maturity are:

- to identify, appraise, and schedule records and professional papers
- to differentiate and separate records into Federal, Professional, and Personal categories
- to preserve records/ papers/ historic materials as they become inactive

- to make records and papers accessible to users through inventories and location aids (i.e. as the backlog of material is processed)

- to implement the new DOE-mandated Record Schedule for Research Records.

In the Committee's opinion, implementing the last item will assist with the first three activities.

The Secondary responsibilities include:

- creating plans for records of multi-institutional collaboration that extend far beyond SLAC. The present agreement with BABAR is a pioneering example and deserves special commendation

- assisting users (beyond the basic work of making records accessible), public relations, and promoting knowledge of the history of SLAC

- developing new ways of scheduling records (working at front-end rather than back-end)

- clearly recognizing the role of electronic records and to archive them when national standards become available

- establishing a minimal level of intellectual control over the backlog of material presently warehoused

- reducing the backlog within an appropriate resource allocation using creative methods (i.e., pre-screening by the grantee, student aides, seeking grant monies for particular collections, etc.)

Actions that Support the Above Responsibilities:

Advisory Group: The SLAC AHO should have an advisory group to help define and refine policies over time and to provide support for enacted policies. A group of Archives Advisors could also assist the archivist in reaching out to the scientific community to identify collections of value and to communicate to new projects the importance of organizing their records properly at the initial stages so that archiving is less labor-intensive. The Archives Advisors could help Jean develop a list of key collections to use as a self assessment tool, comparing what the Archive should acquire with what it already has. Over time, this could be used to document the success of the effort and to develop priorities. The chair of the Archives Advisory Group should be the chair of the Archives Review Committee.

Reorganizing the Distribution of Effort: Meeting the priorities of finding, appraising and organizing will require a reduction in effort currently spent in the reference and exhibit assistance that is now provided to other SLAC groups. Some suggestions mentioned include:

- setting a time limit on research efforts for various types of requests

- establishing policy for how requests are handled; i.e., by originator, by setting time limits

- developing a recharge system and requiring an account number

- making SLACARC and SLACPHOTO databases available through the Web so some assistance can be eliminated or filtered.

- shifting some responsibility to the requester - however, this must be done judiciously so that the collection is not compromised

Major customers in the SLAC Directorate and the SLAC Legal department need to be informed of limitations in service driven by the limited size of the Archives staff. This problem was of particular concern to the committee. The archivist has a unique expertise in and familiarity with the history of SLAC that should be used in an appropriate manner, but this should not interfere with the primary functions of the AHO.

- The Committee recognizes that the Archivist plays an important SLAC-wide role in providing professional judgment, historical perspective and in-depth knowledge of the Archives' contents and records. However, given the limited staffing of the Office, the Archivist should carefully balance requests for research, artifacts, records, and data against the previously identified priorities of appraisal, collection, and arrangement. The Archivist needs to apply her professional judgment to order (triage) reference requests: personally researching only those requests requiring her unique knowledge, skills and training; redirecting those which can be fully or partially handled by the requestor or the requestor's staff; and suggesting alternate sources of information or research assistance, as appropriate, for all other types of requests.
- The TIS should discuss with the SLAC management a charge back **to discourage major ASSIST** requests that take time away from the top priority tasks.
- Priority should be given to the completion of the electronic indexing of the photo archives.
- Thumbnails should be provided as soon as possible.
- Carry out quick response indexing of collections where possible.
- Require that the donee provide an index to the boxed records (as is now done at LBL).
- Policy Development: The AHO should develop a collection development policy statement that recognizes the centrality of collection and preservation of the lab's records, including electronic records. A collection policy statement for the Archives would be useful in allocating effort and resources for optimum effect with limited resources.
- The AHO should, working closely with the Archives Advisory Group and the affected user communities, to develop a user assistance policy. This is critical if the balance of the workload is going to be successfully shifted to finding, appraising and organizing SLAC's history.
- A Directorate-supported policy and procedures for the preparation of records coming to the Archives would help enormously in balancing the work. Developing specific procedures for record preparation which are then distributed with management support to key personnel will help ensure control over (and knowledge of) materials coming to the Archives.

- Collaboration with External Communities: Stanford University's Archives is a potentially valuable source for collaborative projects. The SLAC Archivist should explore the option of including the SLAC photo collection in a project currently in preparation in the Stanford University Archives. There might be other areas of cooperation that would lead to mutual benefit. The AHO has already made an excellent start in its efforts to document the history of BABAR as the collaboration develops and matures. The Stanford archivist (Margaret Kimball) was interested in more joint work and saw several ways in which the programs at SLAC and on campus could help each other.

- The Archivist should develop external support for special projects and when appropriate, apply for grants from external sources and work with other archives. In particular, the Drell and Richter papers might be appealing collections for external processing and arrangement support. Local foundations could be a good bet for these particular collections.

- Explore the possibility of an adjunct appointment to San Jose State Faculty for Pat and/or Jean. That would give them access to the San Jose faculty and to Library Science students, who, in turn, could find unique learning opportunities by working on the SLAC archives.

Annual goals for the SLAC Archive program should be set by the Archivist and the Director of TIS with advance input from the Chair of the Archives Review Committee. These goals should be communicated to the Associate Director for Research.

Electronic Records

It is clear that there is still a significant lack of information about how to best identify, collect and preserve access to electronic records. No one in the US is dealing adequately with this question. It is a major unsolved problem for archivists. The Committee recommends that the Archives not try to take a leadership role at this time but to treat electronic records according to current best practices - and save critical records in print and electronic-only records in the most reasonable and cost-effective manner. When current research and initiatives result in a clearer understanding of what policies and practices ought to be followed, SLAC could be a leader in this field by undertaking to review, implement, and comply with NARA /DOE guidelines and policies.

The committee did not discuss in detail the effect of the web upon the archive function. This is an important issue and will be the subject for discussion at an appropriate time in the future.

The Committee fully recognizes both Jean Deken's knowledge in the area of electronic record archiving and also the visibility she brings to SLAC through her writings and invited talks.