

Please Donate ICCF Proceedings To The Niels Bohr Library

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The Niels Bohr Library is dedicated to the history of physics and allied fields. It is part of the Center for History of Physics of the American Institute of Physics (AIP), located in College Park, Maryland. (See <http://www.aip.org/history/nblbro.htm>.) I have recently been in contact with director of Library, Dr. R. J. Anderson. He has indicated that the Library is interested in preserving proceedings of cold fusion conferences. **I would like to coordinate the process of collecting these important materials from those who are willing to become donors.** Please contact me, preferably by email, even if you have only one volume to donate.

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We should support an effort to preserve cold fusion documents in central locations, preferably in several countries. I would like to know, as soon as possible, how many items are available. Once I have learned this I will contact the people who offer documents and tell them which library is willing to receive the ICCF proceedings. I know that many of you will find it difficult to say good-bye to precious documents. But, as they say, “you can’t take it with you.” So please donate to an institution in which documents will be available to future generations. I suggest you write on the title page: “Donated by” and perhaps add a very short comment on the present situation. Somebody will be thankful to you eventually. People will talk about attitudes toward cold fusion as we talk about attitudes toward findings of Galileo.

Please contact me about this, but do not send me any actual documents. I would appreciate your forwarding of this message to other potential donors, especially if you suspect that they are out of touch. Also consider a possibility of becoming a volunteer for interviewing cold fusion researchers, as suggested by Dr. Weart (see his letter below). Contact him directly if you, or somebody you know, are interested. His address is:

Dr. Spencer R. Weart
Center of the History of Physics, AIP
One Physics Ellipse
College Park, MD 20740-3843

Tel: 301-209-3165
chp@aip.org

When I inquired about cold fusion, Dr. Anderson wrote: "Thank you for your recent letter regarding cold fusion . . . We appreciate the offer to help us obtain copies of the proceedings of the international conferences on cold fusion. We do not have the proceedings and would be pleased to have you ask participants at the upcoming conference in France for copies on our behalf. We've checked online to determine if any one library has the proceedings for all ten conferences, and we weren't able to locate any that do . . . "

Prompted by Dr. Anderson's response, I asked about the possibility of preserving transcripts of interviews with leading cold fusion researchers. Dr. Spencer R. Weart, Director of the AIP Center of The History of Physics, wrote to me on October 1, 2004:

"We hope your appeal succeeds; the conference proceedings would be a fine addition to the collections of our Niels Bohr Library. Certainly you can show Joe Anderson's letter, and this or any of our other e-mails, to anyone.

We are glad to help support interviews with physicists whenever an appropriate interviewer can be found. In our grants-in-aid program, we will support any qualified historian (someone with publications in history of science, or enrolled for a degree in the field) and let them choose who is to be interviewed. The first problem is thus to find the historian. I don't know any who have been studying cold fusion -- certainly it is a fascinating topic but there are so many other topics to study, and historians usually look at things farther in the past. Thus it would be necessary to advertise in the history of science community and see if we could find, for example, an underemployed postdoc who would like to do it as a job.

Oral history interviewing is surprisingly expensive. For an ongoing program in oral history, there is an incremental cost of about \$750 per hour of interview to do the research, make travel arrangements, conduct the interview, and transcribe, edit, and catalog the tape-recording and transcript. Thus a typical three-hour interview would have an incremental cost of \$2250. But for a new project there would also be start-up costs (hiring the interviewer and other administrative arrangements, initial research to select the best interview subjects, etc.). A minimum of \$15,000 would be needed to initiate a program that would conduct in-depth interviews with several pioneers, perhaps totaling ten interview hours or a bit more. The selection of people to be interviewed would be up to the historian, but of course your advice, and the advice of others in the community, would be seriously considered. All that said, I can't guarantee we could find a suitable interviewer, but the chances are pretty good.

An alternative would be for you to find someone, not necessarily a trained historian, interested in researching and conducting the interviews as an unpaid volunteer. We could then offer guidance in how to go about it, and could probably provide some travel funding through a grant-in-aid, plus a limited amount of transcription and cataloging. If more than a few interview hours are done we'd need a bit of support for the transcription and cataloging. The problem of course is to find someone who is interested, which would probably be someone in your community, and who would at the same time interview in a thoroughly objective fashion."