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The Institute

The Design of Physics Buildings

NEW physics buildings or renovated quarters for physics departments are now being planned by nearly half of the colleges and universities in the United States that offer a major in physics. In recognition of the importance to physicists of this anticipated construction activity, a systematic study of factors to be considered in designing physics buildings will be carried out during the next eighteen months under the joint auspices of the American Association of Physics Teachers and the American Institute of Physics. Made possible by a grant of \$75 850 from the Educational Facilities Laboratories, Inc., the study will be directed by R. Ronald Palmer of Beloit College, a former president of the AAPT who is currently a member of the Institute's Governing Board.

The AAPT has taken the lead in initiating the project. In 1957, Yale K. Roots, then at New York University, was named by the Association to head a committee charged with making a preliminary survey of the subject. In May 1958, that group, the AAPT Committee on the Design of Physics Buildings, reviewed the survey results at a conference at AIP headquarters. The committee reported that physics departments in 430 schools out of a total of 540 offering a major in physics responded to a questionnaire, and that of these, 345 departments expressed willingness to cooperate in a thorough study of physics building facilities. It was learned that 58 departments had recently moved into new buildings and that 80 had modernized their old quarters. An additional 26 had new buildings in the process of construction, and 78 indicated that their present quarters would be renovated. 172 physics departments reported plans for constructing new buildings at a total estimated cost of \$240 million.

In conducting the AAPT-AIP study, Prof. Palmer, with the help of a consulting architect, will collect first-hand information about existing physics quarters and will examine lecture rooms, laboratories, and other facilities for strength and weakness of design. It is anticipated that the results of the study will be made available to building planners as a series of booklets dealing with different facets of building design, microfilm records of building plans, and check lists. Records of the project will be stored in a central location for use by physicists and architects. Headquarters for the study will be at the American Institute of Physics, 335 East 45th Street, New York 17, N. Y., and all communications concerning the survey should be sent to Prof. Palmer at that address.