

editorial

An obligation to future generations

Each generation, in a profession as actively creative as our field of physics, owes it to later generations to pass on as much as possible of the mood and spirit of those who contribute to the field. The AIP Center for History of Physics was founded as a result of the idealism and foresight of a relatively small number of individuals who recognized this obligation. As time has passed, an increasingly large number of our colleagues have come to realize that the AIP Center is coming to be a treasure house for those who wish to gain a deeper and more human insight into the advances in our field than can be obtained from the purely formal scientific literature.

The role that the Center was able to play in joining with many other organizations in celebrating the Einstein Centennial has helped to throw a spotlight on the importance of the history of physics. The Center's travelling exhibit on Einstein is on display at this moment in all fifty states and various foreign countries. This exhibit (funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities through a grant to the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey) has gone out in over 150 copies to places such as county libraries, science museums, and the Texas and Minnesota State Fairs. Not only physicists but the general public, in hundreds of thousands, are experiencing a new appreciation of the traditions of modern physics from this exhibit. Although opportunities like the Einstein Centennial are rare, it is clear that the value of the AIP Center's work will continue to grow in an almost unlimited way as it accumulates material and makes available an ever more complete archival record of the developments in our field. The success of the Center has stimulated comparable efforts in historical collection and research by other societies, institutions and laboratories in the scientific community.

Although AIP provides a budget for regular operations, the Center needs continual outside financial support if it is to carry out its role fully. Some of the support is needed to give flexibility to the general work of the staff employed at the Center—for instance, to complete oral history research while the principals are still alive. Other

funds are needed to support research in the archives by outside scholars.

Under Emanuel Piore's leadership as former chairman of the Council of the Friends of the Center for History of Physics, we have made very substantial strides in placing the AIP Center on as firm a financial base as it has ever had. The continuing, enthusiastic support of the entire physics community and its friends is needed to make certain that the momentum that has been achieved is not lost. As the new chairman I sincerely hope that both the member societies and the far-sighted individuals within our societies will continue to recognize the importance of the Center by contributing to it on as regular a basis as they can.

Above all, we hope that the circle of individuals who make annual contributions to the work of the Center will expand as ever more people in our community learn of the Center's great value.

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