

History of Physics Catalog Is Now On-Line

Locating historical physics collections is now a little easier, thanks to the recent launch of the World Wide Web version of ICOS, the International Catalog of Sources for History of Physics and Allied Sciences. Compiled by the American Institute of Physics' Center for History of Physics, ICOS lists information on over 500 repositories worldwide that contain the papers of individual physicists, astronomers and geophysicists, as well as oral history interviews and records of major institutions.

Even before its on-line debut, ICOS was widely used by historians. But accessing it was "quite clumsy," says Joe Anderson, assistant director of the history center. Users had to either go to the history center, in College Park, Maryland, or send in requests for staff members to research.

Physics historians have welcomed the on-line version. Finn Aaserud, director of Denmark's Niels Bohr Archive, considers ICOS "an invaluable source for any historian interested in any topic relating to the history of modern physics. . . . Getting the relevant information with a click of a button makes an enormous difference in my own work and undoubtedly in that of other historians." Aaserud is presently using it to research physicists' attitudes toward Niels Bohr's political activities during and after World War II, when Bohr envisioned creating an "open world." "Although we have mountains of documentation here on Bohr's effort from his own perspective, the only way to obtain an impression of others' opinions is to look at other collections," Aaserud explains. "And the best place to start looking is ICOS."

Using ICOS was never a problem for historian Nancy Greenspan, as she lives just 20 minutes by car from the history center. Even so, she is "quite excited" to have the catalog on the Web. In preparing a biography of Max Born, she was able to dig up some relevant correspondence tucked away in several Russian collections. "When I accessed it, I was sitting at my house, so I could take my time and just explore." With a list of references in hand, Greenspan could then contact the archives directly, to get copies of the actual documents.

The catalog can be reached through the history center's homepage at <http://www.aip.org/history/>. Additional information is available from the Center for History of Physics, AIP, One Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740; e-mail nbl@aip.org. **JEAN KUMAGAI**

McNutt Will be Next AGU President-Elect

On 1 July, Marcia K. McNutt, director of the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI), will become president-elect of the American Geophysical Union. After serving her two-year term, McNutt will succeed John A. Knauss (University of Rhode Island) as AGU president.

McNutt, a marine geophysicist, earned her BA in physics from Colorado College in 1973 and her PhD in Earth sciences from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in 1978. She then worked as a researcher for the US Geological Survey in Menlo Park, California, joining MIT's geophysics faculty in 1982. Last year, she left MIT to assume the directorship of MBARI. McNutt's research includes studies of the mechanical response of Earth's crust and upper mantle to tec-

tonic stress, and of the thermal structure of the oceanic lithosphere in the vicinity of hot-spot volcanoes.

In her candidate's statement, McNutt said that as AGU president she would aim to "make the expertise of AGU more widely available to Congressional staffers and administration officials prior to the drafting of legislation and policy statements." She also plans to push for greater recognition of the accomplishments of geophysics students and "to facilitate their search for fellowships, postdocs and other employment in areas beyond geophysical research and education."

Also taking office in July are John

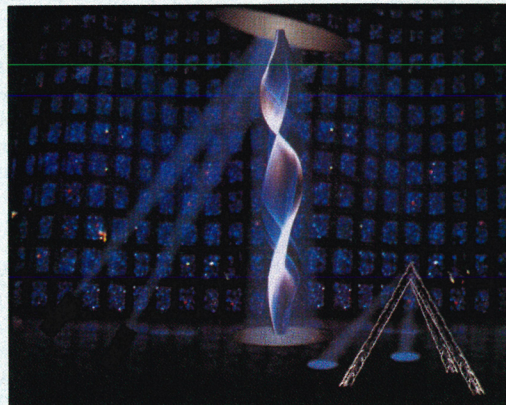


MARCIA K. MCNUTT

New York Exhibition Marries Art and Science

LightForms '98, an exhibition of interactive, light-based art, opens this month at the New York Hall of Science. Organized by the nonprofit group Art & Science Collaborations Inc (ASCI), the show features three large-scale installations chosen for both their scientific and aesthetic appeal.

British artist Paul Friedlander's "Dark Matter" is one of the featured works. "I'm an interdisciplinary person by nature," says Friedlander, who holds bachelor's degrees in both physics and fine art. "I see my work as exploring the areas of contact between art and science." As seen in the computer-rendered image at right, the central element of "Dark Matter" is an undulating, vaporuous waveform that rises seven meters from the floor. Friedlander created the effect by illuminating a spinning rope with a high-power arc lamp reflected off a Mylar mirror. The arc lamp (on loan from the rock



PAUL FRIEDLANDER

group Pink Floyd) has been configured to shift color rapidly, in sync with the rope's rotation. When the rope rotates fast enough (around 600 rpm), the human eye perceives a three-dimensional multicolored image. Visitors can trigger changes in the sculpture's color and shape by passing through a pair of sound beams, located in the triangular structure at the lower right.

"Dark Matter" and the show's other works will be housed in the museum's Great Hall, a setting that ASCI founder Cynthia Pannucci calls "one of the most appropriate spaces in the world for light art. It's like a humongous cave, or a cathedral." The only natural light entering the 24-meter-high interior is filtered through bits of cobalt-blue glass imbedded in the walls.

LightForms '98 will run from 17 April through 31 May; museum interpreters will be on hand to explain the science underlying each piece. The hall is located in the Corona Park section of Queens, New York. Information is available at the museum's Web site, <http://www.nyhallsci.org>, or by calling 718-699-0005.

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