

lion a year for five years. Toukan adds that Jordan "has already launched a political and diplomatic campaign to persuade other Arab countries to join SESAME, starting with the Arab Gulf states."

Of the seven bids to host SESAME, Jordan's was favored because of location. The potential sites could be easily reached by Israeli and Palestinian scientists, whose participation is key if SESAME is to help improve relations in the region. Siting SESAME in Jordan, says Joel Sussman, a structural biologist at Israel's Weizmann Institute of Science, "would be superb for us—we could throw our samples in the back of a van, and be there in two or three hours." The Palestinian Authority, whose bid to host SESAME was defeated, would also have been an excellent choice, he adds.

At least one of the losers in the contest hasn't given up yet. In terms of technical know-how and existing infrastructure, "Armenia's [site] proposal was and still is the only realistic one," insists Varduhi Asaturian, a physicist who represents Armenia at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which is acting as midwife to the project. Armenia's distance from the Middle East conflict worked against siting SESAME there—but supporters note that the facility could promote good relations among other traditionally hostile neighbors. The Yerevan Physics Institute could house SESAME, and the synchrotron could be readied for \$10 million less and two years sooner than elsewhere, Asaturian claims. In addition, Armenia has 350 or so scientists, engineers, and machinists who could work on the synchrotron—a team of them is helping dismantle BESSY I.

Americans of Armenian descent are lobbying the US government to support siting SESAME in Armenia. And Jirair Hovnanian, a businessman who is heading up the US campaign, has written to UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura, requesting that he revisit the SESAME decision and make a "fair and impartial recommendation." Money for the project could be raised in Armenian diaspora communities, Asaturian and Hovnanian say. At press time, though, the Armenian campaign had yielded no results.

Additional money must still be raised for SESAME. Estimates start at about \$65 million for moving, rebuilding, and upgrading BESSY I, constructing associated labs, and operating the facility for five years.

Planners hope to raise funds from SESAME member countries as well as from other sources, including Europe, Japan, and the US. "The various problems have to be solved one after the other," says SESAME interim chair and former CERN director Herwig Schopper. "In order to be able to discuss the funding and approach possible sponsors, the site decision had to be taken first."

TONI FEDER

Physics Enrollment Leveling Off, Make-up Changing

In 1998, the number of physics bachelor's degrees conferred in the US (3821) was down 20% compared to five years earlier, a period over which the total number of bachelor's degrees conferred annually remained flat. The decline in physics degree production may soon level off, however, according to a recent report by the American Institute of Physics.

The steepest declines in the numbers of bachelor's degrees awarded were seen in departments with graduate physics programs, falling 39% and 24% since 1992 for master's- and PhD-granting departments, respec-

tively, compared to a 10% drop at departments where the bachelor's was the highest degree available.

The number of first-year students in US graduate physics programs remained level in fall 1998; however, the proportion of US citizens among incoming students continued to slide, and in 1998–99 they were outnumbered by noncitizens.

A total of 1323 physics PhDs were conferred in 1998, down slightly from the previous year. And, based on enrollment data, the AIP report predicts a continued decline in US physics PhD production over the next few years.

Women continue to be underrepresented in physics at all degree levels: In 1998 they comprised 19% of bachelor's recipients and 13% of PhD recipients. Their numbers are stronger in astronomy, with 33% of bachelor's degrees and 19% of PhDs going to women in 1998.

These and other data can be found in the latest annual *Enrollments and Degrees* report, available free of charge from AIP, Education and Employment Statistics Division, 1 Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740; e-mail stats@aip.org; Web <http://www.aip.org/statistics/trends/undtrends.htm> ■

Web Watch

<http://www.ucsusa.org/arms/arms-home.html>
<http://www.fas.org/>

Two science-based advocacy groups offer a wealth of on-line material about arms control. Founded at MIT in 1969, the Union of Concerned Scientists has, as one of its current focus areas, the so-called National Missile Defense project. The Federation of American Scientists began life in 1945 as the Federation of Atomic Scientists, which was founded by veterans of the Manhattan Project. Its frequently updated Web site recently featured satellite images of North Korea's Nodong missile test facility.



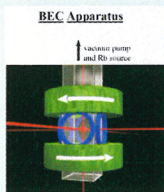
<http://www.spoof.gsfc.nasa.gov/earthmag/demagint.htm>

That Earth itself is a magnet was first realized 400 years ago by the English scientist William Gilbert, who sought to explain why compass needles point north. To commemorate that *coup de recherche*, David Stern of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center has compiled *The Great Magnet, The Earth*, an extensive site about Gilbert's life and work.



<http://www.colorado.edu/physics/2000/cover.html>

The self-professed aim of Physics 2000, an educational Web site from the University of Colorado at Boulder, is "to make physics more accessible to students and people of all ages and to counter its current negative image." The interactive site contains, among many other things, a series of animations that describe the principles and practice of Bose-Einstein condensation.



To suggest topics or sites for Web Watch, please contact ptwww@aip.org by e-mail.

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