

AIP|Matters

Monday, May 16, 2011



Director's Matters

Guest column by Greg Good, Director, Center for History of Physics

Disciplinary history centers' success in capturing the history of science

The AIP Center for History of Physics (CHP) and the Niels Bohr Library and Archives (NBL&A) are the world's premier institutions dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of physics history. Together, these two AIP programs constitute a "disciplinary history center." In fact, we were the first such center in history of science when the CHP and the NBL&A were created in the 1960s. Since then, disciplinary history centers have formed that focus on other areas such as chemistry, computing, and electrical engineering.

I recently visited two such disciplinary history centers that promote the history of sciences closely related to physics. The [Chemical Heritage Foundation](#) (CHF) in Philadelphia focuses on not only chemistry, obviously, but also medical chemistry and nuclear science—topics that clearly overlap some of CHP's interests. The [Charles Babbage Institute](#) (CBI) in Minneapolis serves a similar purpose for the history of computing. CHP, CHF, CBI, and the [IEEE History Center](#) all help scholars and others to explore histories clustered around their core disciplines, but all of them are also very conscious that disciplinary boundaries are not fixed. Much of the best science crosses boundaries and always has. This does not mean, however, that disciplinary history centers are outdated. They serve the critical need for enhancing the visibility of history of science. Working together, these diverse centers cover much more history and many more sciences than their names imply.



This July, the Center for History of Physics will undertake a new initiative by hosting a conference for early-career historians of science, [Continuity and Discontinuity in the Physical Sciences Since the Enlightenment](#). The most important goal of the conference is to bring together the rising generation of

historians of the physical sciences so they can begin to build the next active community of historians of physics. It's their community to build, and both the Center for History of Physics and the Niels Bohr Library and Archives need a strong community of researchers to augment the written history of physics. The early-career historians chose the conference theme, conducted the call for abstracts, and will present most of the more than 30 papers at the conference. Their topics range from investigations of the Geiger-Müller counter and controversies over quantum gravity and statistical mechanics

to the history of auroral physics and the prediction of the positron. The conference also features a public lecture by David DeVorkin, Senior Curator of History of Astronomy and the Space Sciences at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. The evening of Friday, July 29, DeVorkin will deliver a talk entitled "How the Cold War Changed the Smithsonian's Astrophysical Observatory." The [conference](#) begins on July 28 with a full day of sessions and closes July 31 with a look toward the future of the history of physics.

Although the conference is by and for the young historians of physics, [registration](#) is open to everyone interested in the history of physics and allied sciences. Please join us.

PUBLISHING MATTERS

Creating a buzz for *AIP Advances*



AIP Advances recently held a launch party at the Thirsty Bear Brewing Company in San Francisco during the [2011 Materials Research Society Spring Meeting](#). The event presented a great opportunity to network, with 75 very enthusiastic guests in attendance. Two research groups from the UK and Ireland remarked that AIP is doing great work. Many felt *AIP Advances* is interesting, and they are curious to see what happens with the community involvement as the journal continues to grow. The prospective authors were encouraged to submit articles to *AIP Advances* and to visit the journal's [website](#) to rate and comment on papers.

AIP Advances recently held a launch party at the Thirsty Bear Brewing Company in San Francisco during the [2011 Materials Research Society Spring Meeting](#). The event presented a great opportunity to network,



AIP staff enticed conference goers to attend the launch party by holding a raffle. Pictured is Marketing Manager Mary Griffin with the winner, holding his new Flip video camera.

PHYSICS RESOURCES CENTER MATTERS

Students shine at APS April meeting in Anaheim

Last month, just down the street from Disneyland, the APS April meeting drew more than 1000 physicists from all over the world. Conference goers learned about the latest developments in nuclear and particle physics, cosmology, physics education, and more. Society of Physics Students Director Gary White and Assistant Director Tom Olsen were there to support the student and SPS presence. In addition to excellent sessions such as an update on the discovery of exoplanets, status reports on the search for dark matter, and the physics of Hollywood, students participated in oral presentations, poster sessions, lunch with the graduate students, a career panel, and finally, a student awards reception. Bo Hammer, AIP Associate Vice President of Physics Resources, participated in the APS-sponsored graduate student career panel, which consisted of physicists representing industry, academia, and nonprofits. Panelists discussed the relevance of physics to their career trajectory and offered advice to the grad students as

they embark on their own career paths. Dozens of students presented their research on topics ranging from design of a rail gun to plans for a monitoring system at the Large Hadron Collider. Among the student presenters were SPS members [Travis Barnett](#) and [Alex Tuna](#), who gave overviews of their summer experiences on Capitol Hill as the inaugural [Mather Policy Interns](#).

The student awards session was capped off with a rousing team physics quiz developed by APS's Crystal Bailey (pictured at right), with the winners choosing from a selection of prizes such as cool physics plushies.



Physics Today holds naming contest for online departments



On the new [Physics Today website](#) (currently in beta testing and set to launch in mid-June), the web-only content is currently named "Online Departments." Our testers, however, find that the title does not sufficiently distinguish web-only content from print content that also appears on the web. AIP staff members are invited to submit their suggestions for a name that better describes the web-only content. To sweeten the pot, the person who comes up with the winning name will receive an iPod. (If more than one person suggests the winning name, then one winner will be picked randomly from among the finalists.) Each person can submit up to five suggestions; the survey form can be found on AIP|InSite ([click here](#)). The contest ends Thursday, May 19.

AROUND AIP

ACP welcomes "Shifting Realities"

On Tuesday, May 10, the American Center for Physics celebrated the opening of a new art exhibit, "Shifting Realities," featuring the work of artists Marilee Shapiro, Stefan Kaben, and Orlando Leibovitz.

Guest curator Sarah Tanguy writes in the [exhibit brochure](#), "Shapiro's work exploits the abstract in the representational and builds on the associative potential of objects." Her bronze sculpture, *Staircase*, "reduces the flight of steps to a cascade of interlocking right angles in contrast to the arched positions of three figures, or one figure shown at different points of time."

"Stefan Kaben chooses the natural realm as the starting point for his series, Phase Transitions." In his photo, *Cosmic Eddy* (at right), Kaben suggests the swirling pattern of deep space with his use of oil, water, food coloring, sugar, the Sunday comics, and strong side lighting.



Artist Marilee Shapiro



Artist Stefan Kaben (...Look familiar?)

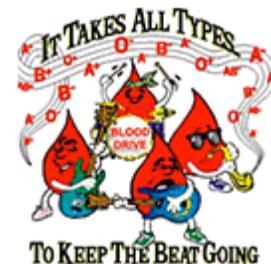


Artist Orlando Leibovitz

"In Painted Physics, Orlando Leibovitz celebrates the contributions and lives of leading physicists." Albert Einstein's biography, linking art, science, and beauty, inspired Leibovitz to create the series. The painting shown right, *Albert and the Electromagnetic*, depicts a young Einstein riding a light wave. [Read more](#) about the exhibit and the artists.

ACP blood drive—keep the beat going

There is no substitute for blood—which has a short shelf life of 35 days—so patients count on every life-saving pint donated by volunteers. On May 25, the ACP Events Committee will be holding a blood drive for College Park employees. Contact [Donna Jones](#) or visit the human resources department to schedule an appointment.



We invite your feedback to this newsletter via email to aipmatters@aip.org.

For past issues of this newsletter, visit the [AIP Matters archives](#).