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1-1-2004

## Looking backward, looking forward: Forty years of U. S. Human Spaceflight Symposium

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### Recommended Citation

Handberg, Roger, "Looking backward, looking forward: Forty years of U. S. Human Spaceflight Symposium" (2004). *Faculty Bibliography 2000s*. 4407.  
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/facultybib2000/4407>



first American troop withdrawals on June 8, 1969. This decision was reportedly based on the increased ability of RVNAF forces to pick up American slack on the battlefield, though the record clearly shows that neither Nixon nor the JCS shared this belief. The administration still sought a way to balance the need to publicly wind down the war with the need to increase pressure on the enemy, and turning to JCS recommendations for assaults on Cambodia was a logical next step. So on March 17, 1969 Nixon and Kissinger initiated secret MENU bombings of NVA supply lines across the Cambodian border in an effort to step up the war effort while simultaneously withdrawing troops. Webb's decision to treat Cambodia as an essentially unrelated issue in Chapters 7 and 8, thereby excluding this aspect of American strategy from his analysis of Vietnamization policy formation, detracts seriously from his presentation of Nixon's policymaking process.

Despite its shortcomings, Webb's book can be of great use to historians. It is the most thorough presentation of JCS activity during this time period to date, and it is based on an impressive depth of JCS sources. Most interestingly, it provides a glimpse into the position of the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the conduct of the Vietnam War and the bombing of Cambodia at a time when both topics were highly controversial and of urgent relevance. And finally, the fact that the JCS intended this book series to be used for instructional purposes, to orient new officers assigned to the JCS organization, gives the reader insight into the organizational history and institutional memory of the OCJCS since the mid-1970s.

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*Looking Backward, Looking Forward: Forty Years of U.S. Human Spaceflight Symposium* edited by STEPHEN J. GARBER. Washington, D.C.: NASA History Office, 2002; vi + 250 pp., photographs, bibliography; paperbound, \$17.00.

*Looking Backward, Looking Forward: Forty Years of U.S. Human Spaceflight Symposium* nicely presents one important facet of public history: the celebration of the sponsoring agency's past accomplishments and an exhortation to support future directions. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) History Office has a long history of producing interesting and insightful historical works. Many are implicitly critical or, at least, analytical concerning the question being examined. Much of NASA's historical research involves analysis of discrete scientific and engineering programs within the agency, although general histories have also been produced. In May 2001, a symposium was held, jointly sponsored by NASA and the George Washington University Space Policy Institute, on the history and future of human spaceflight. The talks presented there became the basis for the book.

The resulting work is an uneven series of short talks and more scholarly presentations, although the latter are largely summary in nature. A number of the presentations were by human spaceflight participants who were generally exhortative rather than reflective about their experiences. The more interesting presentations were those attempting to place human spaceflight in a larger perspective. Stephen Garber's overview did an excellent job of placing human spaceflight efforts in context. William Bainbridge, Asif Siddiqi, and Robert Zubrin presented recapitulations of their earlier work on social support for spaceflight, the Soviet-American race to the Moon, and scenarios for pushing the human frontier. Frederick Gregory presented an interesting paper on safety generally, flight safety in particular, particularly relevant in the aftermath of the 2003 *Columbia* accident, an event that demonstrated that certain safety processes did not work as well as conjectured. By contrast, John Logsdon drew up several counterfactual scenarios for the purpose of illustrating how different choices could have led to dramatically different directions for American human spaceflight. All of these presentations were informed by history but are not themselves historical reports except in the most general way.

One of the more interesting papers concerned the ethics of human spaceflight by Laurie Zoloth. In a relatively short paper, she considers the various ethical objections to the issue including the costs versus benefits for society as a whole along with a brief consideration of previous European actions in unexplored areas. She concludes that spaceflight is ethical, a not unexpected conclusion given the symposium's sponsors. What is interesting, however, is that such a question was even considered. Most space policy and history analyses assume such issues are already settled. Yet, in a world of finite resources, the ethics of engaging in an enterprise whose benefits are long term while the social costs are immediate is a very relevant question, and one too often readily pushed to the side with bromides about the search for knowledge, expanding the frontier, and pursuing human destiny.

Overall, this volume's value for a public historian is as an example of the historical-educational work often part of their duties and obligations. NASA as an organization has an illustrious history of supporting historical analyses of its programs. The agency's explicit goals are to educate the public and generate interest in its activities. The support received by NASA must come from Congress, whose members generally respond to constituents' views. Space activities are glamorous but infrequent events, so publications such as these help to keep public interest high. More importantly, their appearance justifies the preservation of historical records for future generations of scholars interested in the field. Such preservation efforts are particularly important in technological areas where the practitioners are often extraordinarily hostile to history in their attitudes and beliefs. This volume tells one story of the human experience in reaching for the stars and the first steps in that process from the perspective of one side, the United States. The contributions of the Soviet Union (now the Russian Federation), the other major player, often were

neglected, but that is slowly changing as more Soviet-era files open to allow study and comparison. The larger value of this volume comes in its celebration of human courage and the technological triumphs that made that courage possible. In the aftermath of the *Columbia* accident, both ideas are now in the public eye for a brief time, but the story told here speaks even more broadly to the meaning of the human experience.

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*Getting Around: Exploring Transportation History* by H. ROGER GRANT.  
Melbourne, Fla.: Krieger Publishing Co., 2002; xx + 202 pp., ; clothbound,  
\$29.95; paperbound, \$24.95.

Getting around is the most basic of human activities and is an appropriate title for this valuable little volume on the history of transportation in the United States. *Getting Around: Exploring Transportation History* not only provides contextual histories of transportation in the United States, but also offers a guide to the sources of information available to researchers. The book is by no means all-inclusive of the subject, but it does provide the basis for more comprehensive histories of the topics it describes. The book appears to be directed to the cultural resource field and is a good start to a very complex subject. Like any field guide, however, there are sources not mentioned in the book that will come to mind once research has begun—a fact acknowledged by the author, as he advocates the use of imagination in research (p. 47).

As a resident and historian of the Trans-Mississippi West, this reviewer found the chapter on waterways unsatisfying. Steamboat traffic on the upper Missouri and Yellowstone rivers in Montana was common from the early 1860s until the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railway in 1883, yet although mostly anecdotal histories of what has become a largely romantic mode of travel are common, there are few serious studies of the subject for the state and virtually none that examine keelboats. Although natural waterways in North America were among the earliest travel corridors, *Getting Around* contains little discussion about the pre-steamboat era. Keelboat traffic on the inland waterways and the use of sail in coastal waters are also not fully addressed here. Good information, however, is provided on the types of post-Civil War vessels utilized and on the primary and secondary sources available to those interested in learning more. Unfortunately, there is much less on the use of natural waterways in the West.

Any deficiencies in the above chapter are more than made up for in the sections about roads and the railroads. To paraphrase Topsy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in most historical accounts, roads were not born, they just grew. Their development, however, is often very well documented as they were improved from rudimentary tracks through the wilderness into modern macadamized superhighways. Grant provides good general information on the history of