

§4. Hybrid Archives for Contemporary Practices in Physics —Contribution to EASST Conference by the Panel Discussion—

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An international conference of the European Association for the Study of Science and Technology (EASST) was held in Lausanne in August 2006. Under the general theme, “Reviewing humanness: bodies, technologies and spaces,” there were a lot of panels on the issue of re-thinking the Studies of Science, Technology and Society in the 21st century.

Sharon Traweek (UCLA) organized the panel on development of archives focusing hybrid archives for contemporary practices in physics. The panel members were those who engaged in archives of national and international universities, laboratories and institutes, such as, PPPL, Graduate University for Advanced Study (Sokendai), UCLA, Harvard University, The University of Tokyo, KEK and NIFS. These archives represent hybrid collaborations of archivists, historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and scientists. The panelists discussed current processes and problems for archiving and talked on the importance of archival research to the audience of the other academic fields, such as media communication, sociology and various sciences including medical studies.

The followings are some of the presentations at the panel on developing archives, which will be useful Fusion Science Archives NIFS.

(1) Adriana Popescu from PPPL gave a talk on “Preserving the past and preparing for the future: digital archives at Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL).” The library at PPPL is developing a digital archive of the early publications issued at the laboratory (1951-1958) under the code name Project Matterhorn. The work conducted at Princeton University for preserving historical fusion research materials illustrates the efforts of librarians, computer scientists and physicists to ensure the preservation and access to valuable archives.

(2) Naoki Abe from Sokendai presented the talk on the current strategy of Sokendai with 18 affiliated national research institutes. The goal is to develop digital archives at these institutes and collect oral histories at each of them and also to build an infrastructure for each archives.

(3) Yoshinobu Takaiwa of KEK, the High Energy

Accelerator Research Organization of Japan, gave a talk on “International Collaboration on KEK Archives and the Usefulness of the Archives to KEK.” KEK Archives office opened recently and has established links to archives at other scientific laboratories as well as collaborations with science historians and archival scientists. These collaborations are international for two reasons; first, archival practice is not well established in Japan, especially at scientific organizations. Secondly, KEK’s research fields have been international for many decades and better understood from an international perspective. Such archives are no doubt necessary and useful to KEK, however, of which people in various divisions of the organization are not well convinced.

(4) Kazue Kimura from NIFS presented a talk on oral history practices for Fusion Science Archives, NIFS. Some interviews were conducted with the researchers in early days to supplement the history of fusion science research. Some techniques and skills in the process of conducting interviews, such as preparing questions, interview itself, transcribing and editing transcription are considered among the collaborators in NIFS, Informed Consent and Deed of Gift were not exchanged between the interviewers and the interviewee at oral histories in NIFS so far, however, written agreement concerning the condition of interview is to be brought in.

(5) Kenji Ito from The University of Tokyo addressed how nuclear physicists identities became hybrid in uneasy collaboration with trans-local politics. Local residents of Tanashi Town opposed the University of Tokyo’s plan to build a new accelerator there in 1954, which was gradually brought in the political protest movement against nuclear power. Tomonaga, a Nobel Prize laureate and theoretical physicist engaged in Tanashi Town politics regarding the proposed accelerator and finally took a role, as a theoretically correct activist as well as a scientist, and led to hold a consensus conference and to convince the residents to establish a new institute.

There was a noteworthy meeting at CERN Archives during the conference. Anita Hollier, an archivist there, who was scheduled to address a talk on the panel, illustrated the system of production and selection of archiving materials, showing the flowchart of materials among divisions in CERN. The talk on the rules and procedures for archiving and access to archival material at CERN was suggestive for archives in Japan, not for missing important documents. Adriana Popescu, a librarian in PPPL, Anita Hollier, and Kazue Kimura agreed to exchange useful information in developing archives in the future.

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