

# Preview of Award 1734613 - Final Project Report

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## Cover

Federal Agency and Organization Element to Which Report is Submitted:

**4900**

Federal Grant or Other Identifying Number Assigned by Agency:

**1734613**

Project Title:

**Conference: Archival Innovations for Preserving the History of Space Exploration**

PD/PI Name:

- **Jonathan Coopersmith, Principal Investigator**

Recipient Organization:

**Texas A&M University Main Campus**

Project/Grant Period:

**01/01/2018 - 12/31/2018**

Reporting Period:

**01/01/2018 - 12/31/2018**

Submitting Official (if other than PD\PI):

**N/A**

Submission Date:

**N/A**

Signature of Submitting Official (signature shall be submitted in accordance with agency specific instructions)

N/A

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## Accomplishments

### \* What are the major goals of the project?

Collecting and preserving the history of space exploration face three unprecedented major challenges and opportunities. First, as early generations of researchers, engineers, technicians, administrators, and users retire, they form a disappearing treasure of untapped personal histories about the first decades of spaceflight. How can historians and archivists work with these people as individuals and groups to record their stories?

Second, the number of countries, organizations, and companies involved in space is sharply expanding. How can historians and archivists convince these actors about the importance of collecting and preserving their history? What tools can reduce their barriers to capturing their history?

Finally, new forms of electronic communication and data including oral histories and social media are changing the nature of historical records. How can historians and archivists harness these evolving tools to capture contemporary events and ensure they can be accessed in the future?

To explore these issues, “To Boldly Preserve” (TBP) brought nearly 100 historians, archivists, and museum curators together with representatives of the space industry, records management, digital humanities, and libraries to examine the critical issues in creating, collecting, preserving, and accessing space archives.

### \* What was accomplished under these goals (you must provide information for at least one of the 4 categories below)?

Major Activities:

“To Boldly Preserve: Archiving the Next Half-Century of Spaceflight” clearly met a need: 96 people registered to hear 40 speakers in 8 sessions at the American Institute of Physics (AIP) in College Park, Maryland on March 1-2, 2018. The participants came from 66 universities, archives, museums, private firms, and federal offices in the United States and Bristol University in the United Kingdom.

The steering committee contributed significantly to shaping the conference. AIP proved a very supportive host, including keeping the building open when the storm battering the east coast closed the federal government (and forced some conference participants to leave early to safely return home).

To minimize administrative workload by taking advantage of the housing options (including friends and Airbnb) in the Washington, DC area, TBP had no conference hotel. Instead, speakers received a bursary depending on where they traveled from and found their own lodging. A Qualtrics pre-conference survey of attendees provided a sense of expectations used to guide the conference. To encourage mixing, people were randomly assigned tables by their profession for the first day's lunch.

Speakers submitted short summaries (2-3 pages) to the website for participants to read before the conference. The organizers read the summaries and suggested where the speakers could focus more on the conference goals. Wrap-up sessions at the end of both days pushed participants to think about future actions and goals.

While demonstrating great interest in and a wide range of approaches for preserving and collecting space history, the conference revealed a more diverse and fragmented community than the organizers realized. Consequently, post-conference efforts are moving in three basic directions: coordinating the community, collecting information on useful tools and reaching out to space actors.

#### Specific Objectives:

TBP addressed issues faced by all areas of history – encouraging high quality “history from below,” effectively using new electronic technologies, preserving the widest possible range of materials, and educating a new generation of stakeholders about importance of collecting their history.

#### Significant Results:

While demonstrating great interest in and the wide range of approaches for preserving and collecting space history, the conference revealed a more diverse and fragmented community than the organizers realized. Consequently, post-conference efforts are moving in three basic directions: coordinating the community, collecting information on useful tools, and reaching out to space actors.

#### Key outcomes or Other achievements:

### **\* What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?**

The TBP conference demonstrated that the computer and information history community has much to teach the space history community. One specific task is to encourage local and decentralized high quality “do-it-yourself” oral history by providing training to interested individuals and groups based on the Computer History Museum model. To use a medical analogy, these men and women are nurse practitioners compared with the professional historians who are the surgeons.

### **\* How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?**

Post-conference media included an article, [“Archiving the Final Frontier: Preserving Space History for the Future”](#) in the May American Historical Association *Perspectives* and an opinion piece, [“Thinking Historically about NewSpace,”](#) in the April 23 *Space News* by Geoffrey Nunn.

For reaching academic peers, TBP-based sessions were held at fall conferences of the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) and the Mutual Concerns of Air and Space Museums. A similar session will occur at the 2019 Business History Conference. Jonathan Coopersmith discussed TBP in his “No More Hidden Figures” presentation at the Texas A&M University April Fallon-Marshall panel.

Angel Callahan and Jonathan Coopersmith addressed the Business Archives Section of the Society for American Archivists at its 2018 conference.

As part of outreach to the space community, Geoffrey Nunn briefed the Washington State Space Coalition on the TBP conference in March. In June, Geoffrey Nunn and Erik Rau participated in a panel on telling the New Space story at the “New Space” conference. In October, Geoffrey Nunn discussed the historical implications and importance of New Space at the International Space University executive education training at the Seattle Museum of Flight. A session has been proposed for the October 2019 International Astronautical Congress in Washington, DC.

TBP has published one newsletter in fall, 2018 and will publish a second newsletter in spring, 2019. This biannual schedule is expected to continue.

Texas A&M Press remains very interested in publishing a synthesizing book from the conference. To ensure the book will still be relevant in a decade, the focus will be on asking “so what” questions and stepping back from, e.g. specific technological solutions, to deeper issues of conceptual frameworks and approaches.

## Supporting Files

	Filename	Description
<a href="#">(Download)</a>	To Boldly Preserve Program 2018.pdf	Program for To Boldly Preserve conference
<a href="#">(Download)</a>	Newsletter 1-1.pdf	TBP post-conference newsletter

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## Products

### Books

- Nothing to report.

### Book Chapters

- Nothing to report.

## **Inventions**

- Nothing to report.

## **Journals or Juried Conference Papers**

**View all journal publications currently available in the [NSF Public Access Repository](#) for this award.**

The results in the NSF Public Access Repository will include a comprehensive listing of all journal publications recorded to date that are associated with this award.

- Nothing to report.

## **Licenses**

- Nothing to report.

## **Other Conference Presentations / Papers**

- Nothing to report.

## **Other Products**

- Nothing to report.

## **Other Publications**

- Nothing to report.

## **Patents**

- Nothing to report.

## **Technologies or Techniques**

- Nothing to report.

## **Thesis/Dissertations**

- Nothing to report.

## **Websites**

- Nothing to report.

## Supporting Files

	Filename	Description
<a href="#">(Download)</a>	TBP Registrant List NSF.pdf	Registration list of participants (for next section)
<a href="#">(Download)</a>	To Boldly Preserve videos.pdf	Site for videos of To Boldly Preserve conference

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## Participants/Organizations

What individuals have worked on the project?

<a href="#">Coopersmith, Jonathan</a>	PD/PI
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Full details of individuals who have worked on the project:

**Jonathan Coopersmith**

**Email:** j-coopersmith@tamu.edu

**Most Senior Project Role:** PD/PI

**Nearest Person Month Worked:** 2

**Contribution to the Project:** PI and co-organizer

**Funding Support:** NSF

**International Collaboration:** Yes, United Kingdom

**International Travel:** No

What other organizations have been involved as partners?

Nothing to report.

What other collaborators or contacts have been involved?

Angelina Callahan of the Naval Research Laboratory and Gregory Good of the American Institute of Physics were the two other co-organizers.

The steering committee consisted of

Nathan Brewer, IEEE History Center

Steve Dick, SETI Institute

Alexander Geppert, New York University  
Roger Launius, Launius Historical Services  
Jane Maienschein, Arizona State University  
Melanie Mueller, American Institute of Physics  
Teasel Muir-Harmony, National Air & Space Museum  
Geoffrey Nunn, Seattle Museum of Flight  
Erik Rau, Hagley Museum Library Services  
Margot Lee Shetterly, thehumancomputerproject.com  
Asif Siddiqi, Fordham University  
Peter Westwick, Huntington-USC

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## Impacts

### **What is the impact on the development of the principal discipline(s) of the project?**

Perhaps the main immediate benefit was to bring historians, archivists, curators, and non-academic professionals together to solidify a community and encourage communication and collaboration.

The steering committee will be reorganized to include archivists, curators, and non-academic professionals. More effort is needed to involve community archivists, historically underrepresented groups, and peers outside the United States. To provide consultation with the wide range of space actors, a board of commercial advisors will be established to include space associations, firms, NGOs, and policymakers in the evolution of TBP.

TBP will reach out to space actors with an online toolkit of best practices, standards, models, and principles for our professional communities and for the different audiences of space actors. To maximize our limited resources and avoid reinventing the wheel, we will take advantage of what already exists on other websites as well as create materials to address specific concerns of the space community such as the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR).

### **What is the impact on other disciplines?**

Archiving and accessibility face unprecedented technical, intellectual and practical challenges in the digital age — and space history can serve as an exemplary field to tackle those challenges and take advantage of those opportunities. One long-term goal is to promote the importance of preservation and collecting history to other areas of science and engineering.

### **What is the impact on the development of human resources?**

Many people became active in space exploration and exploitation because they wanted to make history. Over the next years, TBP's goal is to help both active and retired space actors and institutions collect and preserve their history. Working with the International Space University as well as other outreach activities should help instill that sense of responsibility and opportunity among space actors.

### **What is the impact on physical resources that form infrastructure?**

Nothing to report.

### **What is the impact on institutional resources that form infrastructure?**

One universal challenge was the lack of resources, especially time. Holding TBP may increase the visibility of preserving and collecting history and thus its perceived value, thus gaining resources. Providing toolkits for action should lower the barriers to entry for space actors.

### **What is the impact on information resources that form infrastructure?**

Two major goals of TBP are to encourage communication and collaboration and to reduce the opportunity costs and other barriers to entry for space actors and others to preserve and collect these histories.

### **What is the impact on technology transfer?**

Greater dissemination of case studies, approaches to thinking about preservation and collection, and tools to accomplish those goals should benefit wider activity.

### **What is the impact on society beyond science and technology?**

Collecting, preserving, and promoting the history of space exploration and exploration will add to the contemporary and future history of humanity. Decreasing the barriers to doing high-quality historical collection and preservation has the potential to benefit not only other academic fields but any individual, group or organization interested in ensuring the legacy of their history.

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## **Changes/Problems**

### **Changes in approach and reason for change**

Nothing to report.

### **Actual or Anticipated problems or delays and actions or plans to resolve them**

Nothing to report.

### **Changes that have a significant impact on expenditures**

Nothing to report.

### **Significant changes in use or care of human subjects**

Nothing to report.

### **Significant changes in use or care of vertebrate animals**

Nothing to report.

### **Significant changes in use or care of biohazards**

Nothing to report.