

## **SR Visits**

### **John F. Kennedy Space Center Library**

### **Michael A. Arthur, Contributor and Carol Ann Borchert, Contributor Katy Ginanni, Column Editor**

**Arthur** is Head of Collection Development and Acquisitions, University of Central Florida Libraries, Orlando, FL 32816-2666, USA

**Borchert** is Coordinator for Serials, University of South Florida Libraries, Tampa, FL 33620-5400, USA

The NASA John F. Kennedy Space Center Library serves most of the employees who work at the Kennedy Space Center. The Archives is part of the library and contains over four million items pertaining to institutional activities within the Kennedy Space Center. The library collects a wide array of materials that support the work at the center. This is one of 10 NASA Center Libraries in the country, and the focus of the collection is engineering, science and technology. The purpose of the Archives is to document the history of this center. The collection included planning documents, photographs, and 16mm film. The library provides their users with monographs, technical reports, and databases as well as print and online journals.

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### **Introduction**

After obtaining our security badges and going through the checkpoint, we entered the NASA John F. Kennedy Space Center (KSC). The KSC Library is housed in a functional 1960's era government building. We later learned there are 10 NASA centers across the United States, many of which house one or more libraries to support the activities of those employed at the individual NASA Centers. A list of these centers can be found at [www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov). Some of the NASA libraries are scaling back in terms of collections and staff, as they hope to move toward a virtual library model. The KSC Library may consider weeding bound volumes when access is available electronically. The good news is that there are no immediate plans to reduce the size of the KSC Library.

As compared to the other NASA centers, this library is mid-size to small. The library is contained in part of a single floor, with the documents, specifications and standards department across the hall from the main library. The archives is located in another area

of the building. The library contains 1,400 cataloged periodical titles, though not all of these are current subscriptions. There are 36,000 books in the reference and circulating collections, and 91,000 technical reports, specs, and standards. The library also has 500,000-1,000,000 pieces of microfiche.

Our trip was a rare opportunity to visit a NASA Library. The library is focused solely on serving those employed at Kennedy Space Center and, in fact, not everyone working at the Center has access to the library's electronic collections.

When we arrived at the KSC Library we were greeted by four librarians including the Director, William Cooper. Mr. Cooper was our main contact in setting up this opportunity for readers of *Serials Review* to get a glimpse inside the collections at this NASA Library. Elaine Liston, KSC Archivist, supplied us with a brief history of the KSC and how the library was developed. Donna Atkins, Documents Specifications and Standards Librarian, clarified the types of specifications and standards collected at the KSC Library. Deborah Guelzow, Cataloging & Acquisitions Librarian, shared the cool facts that Serialists would like to know about how the library acquires and provides access to the materials. We spent several hours with this group and we thank them for opening up their library and for being willing to go forward with this article.

We began our conversation with a short history of the KSC and the KSC Library. The library started as part of the Army Ballistic Missile Agency in the late 1950's, but once Headquarters Building opened in 1965, the library moved. It was in three separate sections until 1970, when it became a single unit. A positive result of the Bicentennial Exposition was the existence of a large amount of materials that were too important to discard. Those in charge of KSC decided that the logical place for these materials was the library, and the Archives began in 1975 as a way to preserve these materials.

## **Staffing**

The library has eleven employees including those working in Archives. The breakdown is 5 Librarians including the Director, and six library support staff. The staff is unionized, so no part-time workers are permitted. They have occasional volunteer support including library school interns and retired NASA employees. The librarians are contract employees with InDyne, which is a subcontractor to Space Gateway Support, and they are not civil servants. InDyne also provides print reproduction services, mail services, computers, graphics, paper and electronic forms, and articles for public affairs for the entire NASA KSC. NASA pays InDyne to run and staff the library as well as the other areas mentioned above.

Librarians belong to professional organizations such as the Special Libraries Association and the Society of American Archivists. The archivist attends the NASA Historical Program Review conference. However, travel funding is an issue, so they are not able to attend many conferences. They do a lot of videoconferencing with other NASA and government libraries, which is paid for outside of the library budget.

## **Target Audience**

The target audience for the KSC Library is the employees of the Kennedy Space Center. Cape Canaveral employees, Air Force employees, and Navy contractors who work on the property who are not employed by NASA may come in and use the library. However, they are not permitted to check out materials. The library's small staff is not sufficiently staffed to actively provide reference to parties outside of the Kennedy Space Center. The library accepts telephone questions from the local public library, or employees with children who have class assignments. Because their main focus is technical information, however, they usually refer people elsewhere for more general-level information. Again, because of funding and low staffing they have to avoid in-depth reference for anyone outside the target audience and they consider the library to be closed to the public for the most part.

KSC has 15,000 employees, but only 2,100-2,500 are employed by NASA; most of the employees at KSC are contractors. This library is not as research-oriented as some of the other NASA libraries. The library's main collection focus is technical data, as their primary target audience is made up mostly of engineers. The library also supports employees who are working toward degrees. For a few years, they were part of an outreach contact center which did answer questions from the public, but that function ended a year ago. Currently the library's phone number is not available outside of the firewall on their website. The library's website is not available to the public, just within the KSC itself.

While the KSC Library does not serve the public, there is an Education Library located in the publicly-accessible section of KSC. The Education Library is part of the visitor center, and they do educational initiatives, teacher resources, and displays. The two libraries operate independently of each other.

## **Collections**

The entire materials budget comes from federal government funding provided by NASA through InDyne. They are not eligible for grant funding. The library has approximately a \$400,000 materials budget, with \$250,000 of that spent for print and online serials as well as databases. For their online resources, the NASA libraries joined together with military libraries and other governmental libraries to form a purchasing consortium. One of the consortium purchases are paid with a single payment from a separate budget. The periodical collection is weighted more toward electronic than print and the Director mentioned that at some point they will consider weeding or storing bound volumes to create space for new monographs. The KSC Library has access to online resources from popular providers such as Elsevier, Wiley, and IEEE.

The Library has access to NASA's Aeronautics and Space Database, which is maintained by the NASA Center for Aerospace Information (CASI). The database provides information on aeronautical and aerospace engineering, computer science, management, astronomy, and many other subjects which may be pertinent to NASA's varied missions.

Periodicals are mostly popular titles about aeronautical engineering, technology, computer science, environmental science, and some medical titles. They bind and retain titles, but bound volumes are stored in more than one place due to space constraints. Some titles, such as shipping regulations, airplane and helicopter regulations, and several copies of the *Code of Federal Regulations* are kept in offices, though the library purchases them. Most of the periodicals circulate, except for the most current issue. Some of the reference books circulate overnight, but there are no fines for overdue materials.

Currently, the KSC Library uses American Overseas Book Company for their periodicals vendor. They also use Emery-Pratt to supply a large percentage of monographs. Periodically the library does send out bids for vendor contracts. However, they also can attach to contracts in use by other NASA Libraries.

The Kennedy Space Center Library Archives contains over four million items pertaining to institutional activities from this particular center, not necessarily NASA-wide. They do have early missile material on Cape Canaveral and early Air Force activity such as missile testing. The archives contain the papers of Dr. Kurt Debus, the first Kennedy Space Center director. This includes a thank-you letter from Jackie Kennedy to Dr. Debus, and the agendas from John F. Kennedy's three visits to KSC. They also have step-by-step countdown manuals, press kits on launches, some transparencies, and approximately 94,000 photographs.

One of their preservation challenges is a collection of over four hundred 16 mm films. They recently converted a 1965 film showing the Corps of Engineers working on the Kennedy Space Center to VHS, but because the films are so delicate, it is not wise to view the films twice. Therefore, if they decide to move ahead with file conversion they do not view the film first. This becomes a catch-22, because they do not know what is on many of these films so they cannot prioritize conversion to VHS or a digital format. If they view the films, then send them for conversion, they risk having the fragile tape damaged during the process. Also, they do not have the technology needed to convert the films nor the necessary funding to outsource this process.

Mr. Cooper is currently exploring the possibility of working with other libraries in the area that have the capability of completing the format conversion. However, as with many other partnership possibilities, the problem becomes security. The library has to complete a rather lengthy process to get permission from NASA to release materials such as this, even when the purpose is long-term preservation.

The documents and archives collection also contains facilities materials, which are used when NASA is considering new programs and needs to look at the original facility plans. Special materials on the history of the facilities are very popular. Donors often give to local museums, or people sell their valuable items to collectors or investors. When someone is selling a group of papers, the archives staff will sometimes make copies of technical data before the material is sold. They are considered a copy archive and not the

national NASA repository. Therefore, the focus is more on technical information related to KSC activities rather than memorabilia. All papers from around KSC are sent through the library. The library copies the most important materials before sending them on to the National Archives which serves as the official archive of NASA materials.

The archives use DBTextworks from InMagic to catalog individual items and photographs. They use metadata, not OCR, and hope to eventually put these records into the online catalog system from SIRSI, which is called NASA Galaxie. The name originally was to be Galaxy, but the name was already trademarked by another integrated library system. The archives have print finding aids for older materials.

The archives staff will scan a photo for a patron as requested and provide it in a CD-ROM format. Public domain photographs are available online, with the stipulation that they cannot be used to promote a product. Access to photos and documents is not easy if it is not already a part of the public record, because materials must be evaluated before they are released to a member of the public. Even if an item is digitized, it must be secured for authorized personnel only.

### **Access to Materials**

The library has been using a SIRSI system for their catalog, which they refer to as Galaxie. The server, the software and systems administrator are located at the NASA Langley Research Center. All NASA libraries are on one catalog for their acquisitions, serials, and cataloging records, but the Authority module is not officially activated. The libraries share bibliographic records, and they can limit a search by location in the system. Prior to SIRSI, they used NOTIS. Everything in the library is in Galaxie, but is not necessarily in OCLC. Technical reports from 1987 forward are in the online catalog, with previous materials listed in a card catalog. The online catalog is not available to the public because of security and low staffing levels.

The library started cataloging materials in OCLC in the 1980's under the symbol SSK (Space Shuttle Kennedy). This includes print journals and about one quarter of the monographs collection. The library fills 99% of interlibrary loan requests. Materials that they are not permitted to loan are not listed in OCLC. Therefore, none of the non-circulating ephemeral documents, which are the more unusual part of the collection, are cataloged in OCLC. The library catalogs their electronic journals, but generally does not put these holdings in OCLC. If they have a print plus online title, they use the print bibliographic record. Online journals have a full bibliographic record in Galaxie.

They are examining the possibility of using a link resolver service, federated searching, and electronic resources management software, but they would need more computer support in order to do this. The library is also considering the purchase of SFX or Serials Solution. However, firewall issues would need to be resolved before the above services could be utilized by their patrons. Another problem is that there are two domain names contained in the physical property of KSC. The United Space Alliance, which is located at KSC, has its own domain so anyone affiliated with this group cannot access the OPAC

or use the online resources. Anyone in the Kennedy Space Center domain can access the library site, the databases, electronic books and journals.

### **Disaster planning**

The building containing the library and archives is a pseudo bomb shelter, but is it surrounded by two rivers. The library and archives are located on the ground floor. During a hurricane, they move valuable materials to the upper shelves and cover the shelving with plastic. Because one corner of the archives is prone to leaking, the plastic is rolled across the top, ready to drop in case of emergency. The library is somewhat inhibited in their goal of disaster preparation because of the age of the building and the location of the library within it. They are somewhat fortunate, however, because they feel that while their collection is valuable to the core target audience, it does not contain items that are so rare or valuable that they must be preserved at all costs. Therefore, there is not the level of preservation and disaster planning that might be found at some special libraries with a larger volume of rare materials.

### **Conclusion**

The Kennedy Space Center Library faces many of the same challenges as other libraries: funding, staffing, and space. The employees obviously work hard to provide the best service possible to their constituents. We appreciate the rare opportunity to have visited this unique library and learn about their operations. Our biggest disappointment is that the new Space Shuttle Launch Experience at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex was not yet open to the public on the day of our visit!

### **Acknowledgments**

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### **Web Sites of interest**

<http://nix.nasa.gov>

<http://grin.hq.nasa.gov>

<http://www.nasa.gov/centers/kennedy/home/index.html>

<http://history.nasa.gov>

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