JOAN NELSON WARNOW (*)

Preserving Documentary Materials for the History of 20th Century Physics

1. INTRODUCTION

I sam what is called in the United States as "activité archivist". We don't juint êt in out libraire suitaign for donce to send us their paper; we go out into the field and play an active nole in deciding what documentation should be avoid. I've been working at the job of arriage modern physics records for 20 years. More and more I see the importance of going out to the physics laddiratories and, in general, rying to understand physicians active activities of a state of the property of the property of the property of the property of an enthusiar, so you can imagine how delighted I am to be been to take part in your discussional about documentairy modern Italian physics.

I shall spend my time with you today describing some of the experiences of our Carnter for History of Physics as the American Institute of Physics in New York; our beginnings, our philosophies, and some of the strategies we have used no document modern physics and autronomy. I would not warm my remarks to be viewed as statements of an evangelist proposing what you in Italy should off your documentation in to be saved, any more than I would recommend that everyone should marry a physicist. But I do loop that by shating some of our experiences—some of the things than have worked for

us - I can suggest approaches that may work for you.

I should remind you at the outset that the American Institute of Physics (AIP) is a coordinating organization of the leading American societies in the fields of physics and astronomy. As such, the AIP represents some 60,000

scientists. Its principal activity is publishing.

Traditionally, individuals and institutions who occupy center stage in world events resumed of a pine in history their letters and other documents would be dutifully cared for, and historians would nake certain that their combinations were entered as accurately as possible in historians which introduces were entered as accurately as possible in historians. The most important scientists of the past were included in this tradition. Gallacia, Newton, Franklin, Earshay — just to name a few. A cantal observer of America.

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In the 1930s might have concluded that the situation for documenting science was, if anything, improving. After all, historians of science and arthritist were both established enough by then to have formed their own specialized societies and, since science in the 28th century was so clearly of central importance, the casual observer could expect that it would claim the attention of both the historians and the archivists. Such was not the case—quite the contray. It took some decades before the extent of the disaster began to energe,

It was in the late 1950s that a few individuals began to be concerned that the great contributions of 20th century physics were not widely appreciated and that the documentary source materials needed for that understanding were not being saved. These individuals were not historians of science: they were not archivists; they were leaders in the American physics community; in particular, Elmer Hutchisson, then director of the AIP, and John Wheeler, then of Princeton University. Hutchisson's prime interest was in starting an effort to document modern physics in the US, while Wheeler's focus was saving the records and the recollections of the great figures in quantum physics, Hutchisson and Wheeler took the lead: they galvanized the support of distinguished physicists, they used their reputations to get grant money from the National Science Foundation for this anbeard of kind of activity, and they attracted a few young American physicists to help with the planning and to carry out much of the work. These young physicists, although they were not trained as historians, were the only people doing serious historical work in modern physics. It won't take a minute to tell you who they were: Paul Forman, John Heilbron, Gerald Holton, Marrin Klein, and Thomas Kuhn.

T have deliberately mentioned names, because I want to emphasize the point that getting a documentation program started is no different from any other truly new effort, whether in the world of physics, international polities, or other field. It requires commitment, optimism, and action on the part of a few dedicated individuals.

I have merged the story of two different but complementary projects, because I want to emphasite the importance of cooperation. Two proposals were submitted by the AIP to the National Science Foundation in 1960. One would lead to the AIP Center for History of Physics and the second would result in the highly successful History of Quantum Physics peoject. From the context, the two programs worked doorly together and supported each other; membership of their advisory committees overlapped. I need deal to further secondary of the project of the secondary of the secondar

The first thing Hutchisson did, back in 1959, was to set up a Committee, with Gerald Holton of Harvard as chairman, to investigate the situation and

recommend an appropriate role for the AIP. The Committee found an entirely bleak situation:

1) Physicists thought their publications offered sufficient record, and ignored or destroyed their manuscript materials;

Archival programs, where they existed, avoided dealing with papers of modern scientists;
 Only a handful of individuals were working on the history of modern physics;

they were, without exception, trained as physicists.

The Committee stated categorically that, unless immediate and drastic

action was taken, the documentation of modern physics would be lost. By year's end, the Committee had drafted a plan of action and Hutchisson had been authorized by the AIP Governing Board to act on it.

Please bear in mind that this group of physicists had to work from scratch; there were no existing programs to serve as a suthictory model. Hence, that first plan of action was remarkable. It included shreved and practical documentation strategies and, even more important, it stated or implied philosophical politicipies. Looking back at these documents and recalling my earliest years at the Center, I can see that just a few basic principles have governed all of the Center's programs from the beginning. A thoughther, there are is commandments?

1) Kap class contents with the enumnity was with to document. For vs., this means physicists and autonomous; more opicically—denting special good-autonomous; more opicically—denting special good-autonomous and cardier, this principel directs us to get out of our library, keep our finger on the palse of the way physics gets done, and talk with individual physicists about the records help produce and why some of them should be sweet. This becomes even more important when people trained as historieus and archivists carry our the work.

2) Kup you progress stable to the numunitary as own. These are educational activities directed oward physicists for remind them of the wals of history, troward historians and other scholars (to struct them to new areas of research), and toward archives for interest them in swing the important records of physics and astronomy). Spencer Weart's paper carlier this week spoke of some of our special educational projects. The ammunition we use dully may be even more important: our Center Newatetry, Isochicures about the Center and its Niles Bohr Library, a booklet for scientists and archivings offering guidelines for identifying records of historical value, and a variety of catalogs of manuscript collections. (See Appendix).

3) Assist and cooperate with related programs. It takes valuable time to persent extends escentific institutions to start archival programs, help other disciplines get Centers started, support related history projects, and assist archivists who

are taking more and more responsibility for saving the documentation of modern science and technology. That valuable time is well-spent. After being isolated for so many years, it is gratifying now for the AIP Center to have sibling history centers in areas like chemistry and competers, and also archives and individual science archivists, to share the work and teach us a thing or two.

4) Dam on capter adulture at model. The obvious point here is the need for an ongoing advisory committee of distinguished physician and historians to guide program activities and no ague for your existence when connents or guide program activities and no ague for your existence when committee that agueles here: "Don't re-inverte the wheel". Call on the experts If you want to know when the accentain kind of record is valuable to a historian of committee or accordance or a

Now, for the last two commandments. In my opinion, these are especially important to national documentation programs, because they cover areas of temptation — areas where we must be particularly alert if we want to succeed,

5) Focus your energies on those activities you can do better than another institution. This point is clearer when put in the negative: do not do what others should, and could, do.

6) Develop discumentation goals and strategies keeping in mind the knowledge you have of your physics community and the big picture — national, but at times international — of what you want to accomplish.

I can illustrate the way these basic philosophical tenets govern all of the Center's programs by discussing the strategies we employ to document modern physics.

A documentation strategy is a structural plan to save those pages and records that are executified or an occurate understanding of a subject. You must define your topic, chronological period, geographical boundaries, and identify the individuals, institutions, insens and events that should be documented. And you should, of course, have a clear understanding of the purposes for awaring the documentation. Ideally, documentation strategies should be designed and carried out as a cooperative effort of the identities who create the records and carried out as a cooperative effort of the identities who create the records label in 1950, the AIP Control had to only physicists: till some of the records strategies, but these physicists understood the value of taking archivirus and future bilitorium is not consideration.

Of necessity, the AIP's first plan of action was very large in scope: to document all important physics done in America between 1890 and 1940. Using historical research and drawing on the first-hand knowledge of distinguished physicists, we identified institutions — particularly academic and

industrial — that had made major contributions to physics during the period. A navery war made of the inhumital laborancies to see what, if say, instrucied documentation was realishly, overall, the findings were disturd, documentation was realishly, overall, the findings were disturd. "The questions "Du you have, or will you write a history of your department?" resulted, over the years, in scores of manuscript histories of academic physical departments.

The single most important strategy from the Centra's founding years was the one designed to save papers of individuals. To Identify the "most productive" American physicists, a sumber of criteria were developed. These included bottoms, dected office, number of papers published in the Physiol Kariwa, and so forth. The result was a list of 1200 — not so large a number considering the name thousands they were celled from. Neverthickes, it was shoundarly dearn many thousands they were celled from. Neverthickes, it was shoundarly dearn many thousands they were celled from the contract of the state of the contract of the state of the contract of the state of the contract of the contr

When we wrote to our 1200 physiciats (or, if they were no longer alive, to their families and colleagens), we did not offer the AFP as a repository for their papers. We did not yet the AFP as a repository for their papers. We did not you present their letters and other manuscriptures and the same of their papers and the arrows and the same and the arrows the as repositories liberary or repository for their seasor.

What tild we ask these physiciens or their families to send to us at the AIPS. First and foremost, we wanted information about any papers they did have; the Center maintains a complete file about the location and contents of manscript collections in an "International Catalog of Sources for History of Physics". We also saked our physicians to send us bibliographies, annotated reprints, and protographs and. — House few — we requested that they write autobiographies protographs and.

Where should papers of distinguisped scientists be saved? Johly, they should be in an archival repository at the institution where the scientist in question agent most of his caner. Some physicians, of course, spend important periods of their caners at different institutions; this makes matters more complicated, but doesn't alter the ideal. For example, Fird Seitz's papers from his years at the University of Elimoias are then in the University Archives; show for his threat as President of the Control of this tuture as President of the National Academy of Sciences are at the Academy Archivers, and Lievens, his records as President of Rockelfler University of the Control of the National Academy of Sciences are at the Academy Archivers, and Lievens, his records as President of Rockelfler University and Archivers, and Lievens, his records as President of Rockelfler University at the Control of the National Academy of Sciences are at the Academy Archivers, and Lievens, his records as President of Rockelfler University at the National Academy of Sciences are at the Academy Archivers, and Lievens, his records as President of Rockelfler University at the National Academy of Sciences are at the Academy Archivers, and Lievens, his records are a transported to the National Academy of Sciences are at the Academy Archivers, and Lievens, his records are a transported to the National Academy of Sciences are at the Academy Archivers, and Lievens, his records are a transported to the National Academy of Sciences are at the Academy of Science

There are a number of reasons for trying to keep a scientist's papers where he storked; for example, the value to the home institution of having its own history intact. But the reason I want to stress here is that it reflects more accurately the way science is done. Physicists tryically work with colleagues, they

report to department chairmen or perhaps to the head of their institution, they participate in the budget process, and serve on institutional committees. The best way to understand the carner of one physicist is to use his papers in conjunction with those of his colleagues and with the records of institutional offices and groups. Whenever possible, then, the AIP Center tries to keep physicistic travers at their loom institutions. The achievement of this goal is another matter.

As a namer of fact, back in the early 1900s, the problem of simply saving important papers from destruction second almost insurrounstable. Remember that, even where archival programs did criet, the archivalts had managed to avoid papers of adorest scientists. If may atmose you to know that in 1940 the cold papers of a 20th century physical send in the cold papers of a 20th century physical send in the contract of Chicago). Let me reconstruct what our Center still and advisors did place, in the early 1960s, as they tackled the severe problem of finding brones for papers. They reviewed our list of 1200 physicians and realized that most of them (about 70 percent) were scademic physicians. Most of these scademic were clustered arround just a few institutions 8 or 10 in manher. It was sone clear that if these few sardemic institutions could be percended to use the papers of their distinguished for Wood West III period would be solved.

Three universities were receptive immediately the University of Chicago (fulnats, perhaps, to the Ferni experience), the University of Ellinois, and Cornell University. The rest required more work, but we found an effective tactic. Here pout will see how strengle it was of the Center to overcome the tempstation to collect at the AIP the papers of the tem of fifty most famous American physicists. It was these few collections that would be the cards up our efferever the genes we could dangle to segue, ajob, or shame academic institutions into saving seasons of their own obsolicits.

Harvard exemplifies the universities that had archival programs but no papers of modern scienties. When the Course located custos of papers of the canison scienties. When the Course located customs of papers of the criminest stressoner, Harlow Shapley, we offered them to Harvard, his home institution. As the sime, Harvard said, "No, not unless the papers come to us castoged." Well, we did the cantoging and the papers were to Harvard. It is think that incident helped changes gove on the Harvard Lawrence associated cannot for a termina many control of the c

Two of the key academic instituctions bad no archival programs whatsovers. CarTech and MIT. I still remember Charles Weiner, the Center's director from 1904 to 1974, making an early trip to CaTTech. He found the papers of the guest Robert Milliam baseled in a basement. He stoot the story to CaTTech provides the control of the control of the control of the your know the CaTTech Archivits, Judith Goodnein, because of her interest in Levi-Civis and other modern Insilian scientists. For some reason, MIT resisted starting an actival program. Bever time the AIP Center who find a repository from a MIT polysicits, we brough the situation to the attention of officials at MIT, remaining them that — outlit bey had their own activates program — they would continue to lone the pares of their important physicists to other repositories. These exchanges probably softened things up, but a dramatter turnsramed came when the Center deliberately held a meeting of its own advisory committee at MIT to discuss the issue with a few key fattoryl and administration. These individuals were receptive to the arguments that an activery program was a responsibility of the Institute and that it would serve the Institute and that if would serve the Institute interests as well. Took the MIT Archives has one of the most contrasting programs in the country. A great deal of the documentation of its own bintory and of physics at MIT is being saved.

Despite these soccess stories, the ideal of placing physicistic papers at their home institutions has not always been realized. From its very legining, the Center has had to employ orthe solutions to save endangered papers. In more instances, we turn to repositories that collect documentation or a national, regional, or subject buils — such as the American Philosophical Society Library, the Bancriot Library and Erdeley, the Ellerary of Congress, and the Smithosomia Institution. The Center encourages the institution of new collecting programs to preserve "homeless" science collections.

Those of you who have winted our AIP Center know that we have records and papers in our own Niels Beht Liberty. The Center serves as the repotitory for the records of the AIP and its Member Societies. The Center does not not-mailly collere papers of individual physicism. It does have some, would because the physiciar's home institution lacks an archival program. The AIP's policy recovered unit papers within from the AIP's policy recovered unit papers where the best to their home the AIP's policy recovered the AIP's policy p

the creation of new archival programs.

The Canter's coal history program has already been thriefly discussed at this menting by Sporcer Weart. I simply want to emphasize here that coal history interviewing has been an important element in our efforts to document modern physics. When carefully propased, dues to per-cented evolutioning provide a viral supplement to lower 500 physicisms. This rich resource grows in three ways; first, we conduct interviews as part of our special tudies or subsidied of playies. Scool, we provide support to the cent history work of other projects related to physics, such as the current laser History Physics. And third, we provide some financial support to the scherol historium out history work of the control of t

What I have ducefied this fit are our earlier documentation astragion and the ways these have been governed by our six commandments. In principle, little has changed. It is true that we have found it more efficient to focus on subfield of phylate, but the strangels involve the same kind of analysis; identification of repric, chronological period, geographical boundaries, and the principal institutions, individuals, insure and events to be documented. In our project letters — or those fetters I write when we learn that papers might be endagened because of durals, nationate, or relocation – the message is sufficient of the contraction of the company of the contraction of

But there have been changes in our documentation strategies. These have come primarily from changes in the physics community itself. In the early 1970s, when the AIP Center transed in struction to the documentation of postwar physics, it found almost everything was different and posthematical. Much of the important physics had shirled away from scadenia with its archival traditions to industry and, in particular, to folderally funded research and development laboratories where records managers held vary. Whereas research in the prevar period was done by one, two, and constantly three people, the Genter found that research was now far nowe likely to be done by large trans. Another point for the histories, was now likely to over only notine matters. Marawhills, there were entirely new types of records; the product of non experiment was aper to be 1,000 resolved or frangentic tape rather than one northook.

If the AIP Center backed expertise in dealing with this contemporary records situation, it soon found that no one clee larve bow to deal with the possiblems. At the same time, we fit is a gest sense of ungranny, because we found that the records were literally in danger. In fact, it was the job of the records managers (the only people dealing with the files) to get rid of the records as soon as possible. There was not a single archivits at these noncoademic research laboratories to office any protection to the documentation.

The result of our periniment findings was an AIP project; we call it our Department of Energy or "DOE" in study. The DOE study was designed to find answers to our many questions about post World Wat II physics and to develop recommendations for improving the identification and preservation of valuable documentation. The design and supervision of this study absorbed me for well over the years and I regree that my centage have much be onlined. (However, two of the project's apoets are listed in the Apprendix). Let are many just a Keep point about the project the seem none pertinent to my spiel.

The main purpose of our DOE study was to become familiar with an area of physics that seemed strange to us. We know about prowar academic physics; now we must learn about postwar nonacademic physics. We decided that instead of spreading ourselves thin, at say 20 laboratories, we would focus on just four;

project field workers spent over eight man-pears working on site at these labonatories. As in our other documentation strategies, we picked our anguste carefully; four of the Department of Benegré National Labonatories (Argones, Berkeley, Brookhaven and Oak Rélge). Once as the labs, we worked closely with physicias and administrators and did the historial research necessary to identify the key people, offices, and committees and the major institutional and scientific creats.

When we had a reasonably clare picture of what was important, we went looking for the records that would be more valuable in Goomeneing the key people, groups, instruments and events. In our efforts to apposite records—that is, to determine the very small fraction that should be sweet for historical purposes — we called on caperts for assistance. Without doubt, the most important expense were the physicises and administrates who had cereated be records. In addition, I assembed a group of advisors who worked very hard on our behalf. Severa of our advisors represented academic disciplines ranging from history of economics to sociology of science; they reviewed file of lishonatory records, studied our find report, and spen from its committee meetings araging for a most coeffilia and firely fusition,) shout the kinds of historicary records that would be most useful to presentations or the first admired disciplines. From the solid incid work and the advises of the accessions and schales, the project convenients and the convenients and

The DOE project has had several benefits. For one thing, there is now a movement smong Department of Fenergy lubocatories and develver to initiate archival programs in order to take better care of their own records. Another, containly important, benefit to us at the API is that the project gave as a familiarity with postwar physics. This has made it possible for us to encourage recentric hibocatories to suria surkival programs and to give fent inconvolegables arbice on how to proceed when they are made, "Finally, it is heartening to see that a small that growing masther of this status are able painting to sure that we have a surface of the province of the property of the proper

kinds of materials should it collers for heel? In survering that question, the API Centers has to deal with the extlicts of limited quesce and funding. But we also feed we have a responsibility in cases where we really are the best place from materials to be word. Here are some camples of our holdings. We preserve the records of the API and in Member Societies as well as endangered papers of physicians, at least until a better home is found for them. We create documentation, primarily through well histories, but also by tape recording eye-where strictly required to the control of the

graphs. We now have close to 18,000 photophraphs of physicists, a resource well-known to physicists, historians, book editors, and TV producers.

Perhaps the most important thing we collect is information about the location and content of manuscript documenting modern physics and stroncopy. Once national in scope, this catalog is now international in its overage, a most sedome sign that efforts to save modern physics documentation are spreading. Remember that, back in 1961, only Fermi's papers were known to be safely preserved in an American repository. Today, at the AIP Conter alone, we have information on the manuscripts of approximately 2500 physicists in responditors around the world.

In closing, I would like to return to our fundamental commandments which have served the AIP Center so well and which, in my opinion, are cogent to other documentation programs:

 Knop class contact with the community you with to document. Keep your finger on the pulse of the way physics gets done, and talk with individual physicists about the records they produce and why some of them should be saved.

2) Keep your programs visible to the communities you serve. Direct brochures, newsletters, catalogs and other materials toward physicists, historians and archivists to foster the preservation and use of modern physics documentation.

3) Assist and cooperate with related programs.

4) Draw on expert advisors as needed.

The last two commandments I think are particularly important to national documentation programs:

5) Focus your energies on those activities you can do better than another institution. In other words, try ant to do what other institutions should and could do. And,

6) Develop decumentation geals and steategies. Keep in mind the knowledge you have of your physics community and the big picture — national, but at times international — of what you want to accomplish.

I hope my resume of some of the Center's activities and the philosophical principles guiding our efforts are of some use to you as you discuss possible means and methods to safeguard the documentation of modern Italian physics. Our best visibes to you!

APPENDIX

1. SELECTED PUBLICATIONS OF THE AIP CENTER FOR HISTORY OF PHYSICS

- Center for History of Physics, American Institute of Physics. A brochure on the Center's purposes and programs.
- Resources of the Niels Bub: Library, Center for History of Physics, American Institute of Physics. A brochure describing the Library's collections of published, manuscript, and audio-visual materials.
- Scientific Source Materials: A Note on Their Preservation. A brochure for scientists and archivists describing the types of source materials historians find most useful.
- Newsletter of the AIP Center for History of Physics. Reports on manuscript collections around the world, AIP Center activities, and journal articles. Issued twice a year.

2. REPORTS ON ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

- Hass, Joan, Helen Samuels, and Barbara Simmons, Apprainal Process for Scientific and Technical Records, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Cambridge, Mass: in preparation.
- Brange, Sanes, in preparament.

 Understanding Progress as Pracess, adited by Clark A. Elliott. The final report of the Joint Committee on Archives of Science and Technology. Introduction by Joan N. Warnow. 1983 publication distributed by the Society of American Archivists, 600 South Federal Street, Suite 504, Chicago, Illinois 6005.
- Warnow, Joan N. and the AIP Advisory Committee on the Documentation of Postwar Science, Appealast Galdelines: Selection of Permannel Records of Department of Energy Laboratory Management and Policy and Physics Research, American Institute of Physics, New York 1982.
- Warnow, Joan N. et al, A Study of Preservation of Decements at Department of Energy Laboratories, The final report of the AIP study of Department of Energy National Laboratories, American Institute of Physics, New York 1982.
- Weart, Spencer R., "Putting the Past to Work". Research Management,
 Vol. XXV, No. 2 (March 1982), pp. 22-25.

3. ARCHIVAL CATALOGS

Published by the American Institute of Physics:

National Catalog of Sources for History of Physics — Report No. 1. A Solution of Manuscript Collections at American Repositories, prepared by Joan Nelson Warnow, American Institute of Physics, New York 1969. Reprinted 1971. Out of print; Ioan copies are available.

- National Catalog of Sources for History of Physics -- Report No. 2.
"Source Materials for the Recent History of Astronomy and Astrophysics: A Checklist of Manuscript Collections in the United States", prepared by Clardes Weiner and Joan N. Warnow. Reprinted from Journal for the History of Astronomy (1971).

— National Catalog of Sources for History of Physics — Report No. 3, Ratherful Careptonieus Catalog, compiled by Luwence Badash, American Institute of Physics, New York 1974. This catalog of all Lord Rutherford's correspondence at Cambridge University Library and at other repositories was published to serve as a supplement to the Sources for History of Quantum Physics catalog.

— National Catalog of Sources for History of Physics — Report No. 4. Guide to The Robert Andrew Milliban Collection at the California Institute of Tabbology, by Albert F. Gunns and Judith R. Goodstein, American Institute of Physics, New York 1975.

- National Catalog of Sources for History of Physics — Report No. 5.
Preliminary Finding Aids to the Archives of the Lick Observatory, from the card catalog maintained by the Lick Observatory Archives staff, University of California at Santa Cruz, American Institute of Physics, New York 1980.

International Catalog of Sources for History of Physics — Report No. 6. Sources for History of Psysics at Department of Energy National Laboratories: Argonou, Brookhaven, Laurente Berkeley, and Oak Ridgy, prepared by Joan N. Watnow, Allan Necdell, and Jane Wolff. In preparation.

International Catalog of Sources for History of Physics — Report No. 7.
 International Catalog of Sources for History of Solid State Physics, compiled by Joan N. Warnow. In preparation.

International Catalog of Sources for History of Physics — Report No. 8.
 Manuscript Source Materials in the Niels Bobr Library of the American Institute of Physics. In preparation.

A Selection of Other Catalogs:

- Contemporary Scientific Archives Centre. Catalogus Compiled by the Contemporary Scientific Archives Centre, edited by Jeannine Alton, Oxford Microform Publications Ltd., Oxford 1979. Supplements, 1981. Guide to the Records Relating to Science and Technology in the British Public Record Office: A RAMP Study, prepared by Michael Jubb. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris 1984.

Kuhn, Thomas S. et al, Sources for History of Quantum Physics: An Inventory and Report, The American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia 1967.

 MacLeod, Roy M. and Friday, James R., Archives of British Men of Science, Manuell Information/Publishing Ltd., London 1972.

 The Manuscript Papers of British Scientists, 1600–1940, issued by The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London 1982.

 Massachussetts Institute of Technology, Selective Guide to the Collections in the Institute Archives and Special Collections, M.I.T. Libraries, Preface by Helen Slockin [Samuels], Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass, 1981.