
Finding aid created by SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory (Archives, History and Records Office) staff using RecordEXPRESS

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2020
Descriptive Summary


Collection Number: 2000-072 (SLAC-001)

Creator/Collector: Addis, Louise; Cottrell, Roger (Les); Johnson, Terry; Kunz, Paul; White, Bebo; Winters, Joan; SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory; Stanford Linear Accelerator Center.

Extent: 5 cubic feet (10 document boxes and 1 oversize print box)

Online items available  https://www.slac.stanford.edu/history/earlyweb/index.shtml

Repository: SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory (Archives, History and Records Office)

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Abstract: This collection documents the creation and history of SLAC's World Wide Web (WWW) site, the first web site in the United States. The collection includes papers, presentations, correspondence, and other related records. SLAC's first HTML web pages in 1991 and a snapshot of the SLAC Archives and History Office web site from April 7, 1999 are notably featured.

Language of Material: English

Access

The U.S. government materials are restricted until they are 30 years old; Stanford administrative records are restricted until 20 years old. Portions of this collection are open for research; materials must be requested at least 5 working days in advance of intended use. Unprocessed records are open only to the records creators. Other restrictions on access may apply to records of a sensitive or confidential nature, or to records relating to ongoing research programs and activities.

Publication Rights

All requests to reproduce, publish, quote from, or otherwise use collection materials must be submitted in writing to the Archivist, SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, 2575 Sand Hill Road MS97, Menlo Park CA 94025. Consent is given on behalf of the SLAC Archives, History and Records Office as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission from the copyright owner, if the material is copyrighted. Such permission must be obtained from the copyright owner, heir(s) or assigns. See: http://www.slac.stanford.edu/history/rules.shtml and also http://library.stanford.edu/spc/using-collections/permission-publish.

Preferred Citation


Acquisition Information

This collection is an artificial collection of items aggregated from a variety of sources, including original gathered from the records creators, as well as contemporary printings from vintage files recovered from original backups.

Biography/Administrative History

This collection was started in 1996 by SLAC archivist Jean Marie Deken, who began discussing with some SLAC employees the importance of documenting the first United States website. Employees who were involved early in the website process called their ad hoc group the “WWW wizards.” The collection includes information from early collaborators Louise Addis, Les Cottrell, Tony Johnson, Paul Kunz, Bebo White and Joan Winters, as well as “Wizards” meetings’ documentation. Also included are contributions from Jean Marie Deken, Kathryn Henniss and Patricia Kreitz, who have collaborated on promoting and preserving SLAC’s web history. Missing from the collection is information from wizards or contributors Mark Barnett, George Crane and Terry Hung. There is also a gap of succinct information about the initial development of SPIRES-HEP (High Energy Physics). Early collaborators were primarily interested in making SLAC’s high-energy physics preprints (SPIRES-HEP) database available to the entire physics community, and the World Wide Web (W3, web) seemed a good way to offer anonymous access. Prior to web access, researchers around the world would contact SLAC and be assigned an email account from which they could query HEP and receive title, author and abstract information. Researchers could then contact the author for a full copy of his or her paper. Louise Addis stated in a 2000 First Monday interview that the web was a better solution for remote access to HEP than a custom X-Windows program (FM Interviews: Louise Addis by Melissa Henderson. First Monday, volume 5, number 5 (May 2000), URL: http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/749/658]. WWW wizard Joan Winters took an early interest in preserving and restoring files. Many early webpages and her preservation processes are well-documented in section II of this collection. README files written by Winters thoroughly explain the provenance and contents of the files in each directory. The majority of files in the 1992 directory were printed. Files from 1993-1998 are generally represented by printed directories and README files only. The “rl” number indicates from which tape cartridge the files were recovered.
Most of the following descriptive information relating to files and web pages in this guide is summarized from the Winters README files. Throughout these files, Winters explains how and when she recovered “snapshots” she had taken in the form of backups of SLAC’s website. These recovery operations were done in different operating systems (CMS, UNIX) at different times, with different results. As much as possible has been printed and preserved here. Most recovery operations were conducted in 1998. Also included are some materials originally gathered as research for documenting that SLAC had indeed created the first US website. This documentation consists of web history materials and publications by people such as Tim Berners-Lee, the web’s inventor.

Scope and Content of Collection
The items in this compilation are notable for their documentation of the development of the first web site in the United States. Several people at SLAC were involved in using the web to transform access to the HEP database from email queries to online GUI (Graphical User Interface) availability. The collection consists of documents and one artifact. Eighty percent of the collection was aggregated from early collaborators and 20% consists of contemporarily printed pages from vintage files that are still available (as of 2001) at SLAC. Documents are generally filed chronologically to best represent SLAC’s web growth and development.

Indexing Terms
World Wide Web
Menlo Park, California
United States
Correspondence
Databases
Publications
Records (Documents)
Web archives
Web manager