

Science Historians Join With Research Institute

Two science historians have begun work on the Saturn History Project at the Research Institute, University of Alabama in Huntsville. Research Institute Director Rudolf Hermann has appointed Barton C. Hacker as principal investigator and John S. Beltz as research associate and co-author of the NASA sponsored history project will result in a full-scale narrative history of the Saturn launch vehicle from the first conception of the idea through its final realization. Both men have had experience writing government sponsored science and technology history. Hacker co-authored NASA's history of the Gemini program, and Beltz worked as an historian of American technology for the Industrial Arts Curriculum Project.

The two men are presently engaged in tracking down memos, telegrams, reports, and other documentary remains of the Saturn program. In addition to these collections, they will interview some 700 persons in Huntsville, Washington, and other locations before organizing the mass of data into history.

Hacker also holds an appointment as assistant professor of the history of science and technology and expects to teach courses next fall. Hacker said the importance of science history to scientists lies in providing insight into one of the major faces in modern society. He said there are two major streams, external and internal, in the history of science. Internal history deals with past problems with which science was concerned. External studies deal with how science fits in with other human activities; for example, what was the Sociology of scientific organizations and what was one social structure of scientific enterprises -- what kinds of problems were scientists interested in during different times. Hacker continued, "The history of science helps bridge the gap between science and the humanities. It provides an approach to science for those who are in the humanities, and provides an approach to the humanities for scientists. . . who are people."

Actually, science historians are a relatively rare breed. Only about 100 colleges and universities offer one or more courses in the history of science, and according to Hacker there are only about 15 programs in the field offering graduate study.

A native of Chicago, Hacker holds two undergraduate degrees and the MA and PhD. degrees from the University of Chicago. His areas of specialization are in the history of science and technology, military history, and modern history. He has taught courses

in the history of science at the University of Chicago. Before coming to Huntsville, he held a joint appointment as research associate, Department of History at the University of Houston, and as senior contract historian, Historical Office of the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston.

Hacker is specifically interested in the relation between technological innovation and social change: the history of military technology, centering on responses to the development of new weapons in the 19th and 20th centuries; and the history of astronautics, especially the development of the idea of space travel.

Beltz is a native of Cleveland, Ohio, and a graduate of Denison University in Ohio, where he majored in American history and economics. He holds the M.A. degree from the Ohio State University and is a doctoral candidate there. As field representative for the Ohio Historical Society, he helped organize the recently acquired papers of President Warren G. Harding. He also served as assistant curator of History at Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont, where he taught courses in U. S. history, U. S. diplomacy, and modern European history. He has also taught history at Ohio State University, Denison University, and the Ohio University Extension at Lockbourne Air Force Base.

Beltz's major fields of interest are in the history of American technology and U. S. recent and diplomatic history.



Drs. Hacker and Beltz, newly appointed science historians at the Research Institute, look over the grounds at the Space Museum on Governor's Drive soon to be opened.