

Fredericka Bell-Berti

Address:

Department of Communication
Sciences and Disorders
St. John's University
8000 Utopia Parkway
Queens, New York 11439
USA

Email:

bellf@stjohns.edu

Administrative Committee Report: Archives and History Committee

The Committee on Archives and History is charged with preserving the history of the Acoustical Society of America, including ensuring the availability of materials for review and use for use during future anniversary meetings of the Society.

Where can one find information about Frederick V. Hunt, in whose memory the Acoustical Society of America (ASA) annually offers the Frederick V. Hunt Post-doctoral Research Fellowship in Acoustics? Where can one find information about the focus of each of the various ASA technical committees during the first 75 years of the ASA (and when and where was the 75th anniversary celebrated)? What prominent acousticians have mentored many students who have become contributors to the ASA? Where can one find information about prominent acousticians and other resources on acoustics? Begin to find answers to these and many more questions on the website of the Archives and History Committee of the ASA (asahistory.org).

In recognition of the importance of maintaining materials of historical value, in 1988, the Executive Council of the ASA established the Archives and History Committee; the first chair of the committee was William J. Cavanaugh, who served from 1988 to 1991. All technical areas of the ASA are represented in the membership of the committee. Making the historical materials available to current and future researchers, potential students of acoustics, and the leadership of the ASA allows us to understand how we have come to our present knowledge (and organizational structure) as well as to appreciate the contributions of those persons who helped to discover that knowledge.

In practice, the Archives and History Committee has focused on preparing for anniversary celebrations of the ASA (check the link to “ASA at 75” at asahistory.org) and between such celebrations helps preserve the history of the ASA and the many subdisciplines of acoustics. One ongoing activity of the committee has been the collection and preservation of oral histories of prominent contributors to acoustics and/or the ASA. This is done in conjunction with the Center for the History of Physics at the American Institute of Physics (AIP) (acousticstoday.org/physicshistory). Two complementary activities are to preserve key documents or other archival material related to acoustics and to collect and present the collected works of the pioneers in acoustics. This latter activity is called the Collected Works of Distinguished Acousticians (CDA) project; check the Works of Distinguished Acousticians’ tab on the Archives and History page (acousticstoday.org/works). The committee also sponsors and cosponsors sessions at meetings of the ASA; the posters from a session on acoustical genealogy are also available at asahistory.org.

Acoustical Society of America Anniversary Activities

The committee is specifically charged in the Rules of the Society with ensuring “the preservation and availability of artifacts and documentary materials for review and

possible use during future anniversary meetings of the Society” (Rule 24.4). The book, *ASA at 75*, prepared for the 75th anniversary celebration at the 147th meeting of the Society held in New York in May 2004, is the result of this charge. *ASA at 75* contains chapters for 13 technical areas as well as education in acoustics. *ASA at 75* is available on the Archives and History page on the Society’s website (asahistory.org/asa-at-75).

Oral History Project

In addition to preparing for ASA anniversary celebrations, the Archives and History Committee has been collecting and preserving oral histories of prominent figures in the Society in particular and acoustics in general. All officers and medal recipients are automatically on the oral history “wish” list; names of other prominent persons in acoustics should be forwarded to the Archives and History Committee for consideration of inclusion on the list. Our goal is to collect oral histories from all persons on the “list” through the volunteer efforts of members of the ASA, who conduct the interviews. Currently, transcripts of fewer than 50 oral histories of these persons are on deposit at the Niels Bohr Library and Archives of the American Institute of Physics (acousticstoday.org/oralhistory). For a current list of oral histories, check the “Oral Histories” tab at asahistory.org.

The interviews are conducted by volunteer members of the ASA who arrange to meet with the interviewee, record the session, and submit the recording to the AIP History Program for transcription. There are procedures for conducting an interview that include obtaining signed permission forms both before the interview and again after the final transcript has been prepared and approved. The interview itself begins with a set of standard questions, following which the interviewer focuses on the interviewee’s professional activities. The transcript is sent to the interviewee for editing and the interviewer for preparation of an abstract. What we need most urgently for this project are volunteers to meet with those officers and medal recipients not yet interviewed (more than 40 officers and 200 medal recipients). We welcome all of you interested in joining this effort to collect oral histories of prominent contributors to the field of acoustics.

Works of Distinguished Acousticians

This project, which began in 2006, was developed to provide full access to the contributions of some of the most distinguished members of the ASA. In addition to traditional publications, these collected works include oral histories, pho-

tos, movies, and videos. Thus far, the ASA Executive Council has approved three collected works projects. The link for ordering the first project in the series, the “Collected Works of Isadore Rudnick” is available at acousticstoday.org/works. The collected works of Leo Beranek and Harvey Fletcher are currently in production.

Acoustical Genealogy

There have been two acoustical genealogy poster sessions that celebrate academic lineages and ancestry in all technical areas of acoustics. Some posters focus on individuals (e.g., David Blackstock, Katherine Harris, and Isadore Rudnick) and others focus on laboratories (e.g., Indiana University and the National Center for Physical Acoustics). The first poster session was at the 153rd meeting of the ASA in Salt Lake City, Utah, in June 2007. The second poster session took place at the 166th meeting of the ASA in San Francisco in December 2013. The posters are available at acousticstoday.org/genealogy.

Other Archival Sources

There are three categories of material under the Archives tab on our website, External Archives (which are actually three resources provided by the AIP), Special Archives, and the History of the ASA, that are also available as a link on the ASA website home page. The External Archives are links to several other sources of information, including the AIP and Niels Bohr Library home pages as well as the AIP International Catalog of Sources (ICOS). This latter is a major resource for information in all areas of physics. The Special Archives contains links to archives maintained by other organizations. These External and Special Archives links lead to a treasure trove of information about individuals and institutions that have been important in the development of acoustics.

Continuing Work: Archiving Acoustical Society of America Collections and Technical Committee Materials

The Archives and History Committee was also charged with developing “management procedures for the documentation, collection, storage, maintenance, and use of archival and historical collections of the Society, and implementing those procedures” and “tracking, and when possible the consolidation, of the currently scattered archives of various technical committees” (Rules 24.1 and 24.3 of the ASA). Under the guidance of the nine persons who have served as chair of the committee since 1988 (William J. Cavanaugh, 1988-1991; John W. Kopec, 1991-1994; Kenneth D. Rolt, 1994;

Dana L. Kirkegaard, 1994-1997; Edith L. R. Corliss, 1997-1999; Henry E. Bass, 1999-2004; Julian D. Maynard, 2004-2010; Victor W. Sparrow, 2010-2016; Fredericka Bell-Berti, 2016-), we have been considering how to go about completing this daunting task; although some of our materials can be archived at the AIP Niels Bohr Library and Archives, not all of our materials are appropriate for that solution.

How Acoustical Society of America Members Can Help the Committee

ASA members represent an incredibly broad spectrum of disciplines, and even though the membership of the committee represents all the technical committee areas, we cannot preserve the record of the ASA and its membership without your

help. We welcome suggestions for existing and new projects, including volunteers to conduct Oral History interviews and cosponsoring Special Sessions. Indeed, the Special Session at the New Orleans meeting for recipients of the Hunt Fellowship began with a suggestion from a member of the Archives and History Committee. We are also interested in helping to preserve acoustical archives that are not part of the collection of the ASA; we have, for example, arranged to have books from personal collections donated to the AIP library or for those books already in that library, donated to a university library.

The takeaway message that I want to leave with you is this: we want your help. If you are interested in helping, please contact the author at fbellberti@gmail.com or bellf@stjohns.edu.



Planning Reading Material for Your Classroom?

.....

Acoustics Today (www.acousticstoday.org) contains a wealth of excellent articles on a wide range of topics in acoustics. All articles are open access so your students can read on line or download at no cost.

And point your students to AT when they're doing research papers.

Be Heard!

Students, get more involved with the ASA through our student council at:

<http://asastudentcouncil.org/get-involved/>



We are Now on Social Media!

Find us at:
Facebook: @JournaloftheAcousticalSocietyofAmerica
Twitter: @ASA_JASA

