PAIG 2005

Project Title: Using oral histories to preserve the heritage of NOAA's Arctic research programs

Project point of contact:
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Amount requested: $25,000

Match amount (not required): $x

List of partners:

Dr. Ronald Doel	Oregon State University
Dr. Kristine Harper	MIT/New Mexico Tech
Nazila Merati	University of Washington/JISAO and OAR/Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory
Sonja Kromann	NMML Library, Seattle

Abstract

The Arctic has long held a special place in the American mind. Dangerous, enticing, and mysterious, the Arctic region first attracted explorers, whalers, ethnographers and anthropologists to its periphery. By the start of the Cold War, because of its strategic location relative to the Soviet Union, the Arctic became an immediate home to military officials and scientists. In recent decades the Arctic region, bordered by eight nations, has become a critically important natural laboratory for studying a wide range of environmental processes, including natural and human-induced climatic variation. It is thus one of the most significant regions where NOAA has worked and currently operates, one rich with heritage resources. However, there is no comprehensive history of NOAA's research efforts in this region.

This project seeks to partially remedy this situation in three ways: (1) by conducting oral history interviews with a wide range of individuals with intimate and unique knowledge of Arctic scientific missions and results; (2) by preserving historically valuable materials discovered through these interviews while disseminating relevant resources through NOAA websites and related venues; and (3) by discovering and preserving unique historical sources that will extend current baselines for studying ecological and environmental changes in the Arctic region over time. This work will directly aid NOAA's efforts to protect and enhance historic resources, including documents, photographs, and instruments, that will help advance knowledge of the environment.

The results of this project will be a body of oral history interviews, digital versions or transcripts of the interviews, and a listing of photographs and other documents identified by the interviewees. We will also create a digital archive of the materials discovered as a part of this project. Additionally, we will create a timeline and history of aspects of NOAA efforts in the Arctic and link this to available bibliographies for the projects represented. The last result will be a list of materials that have been identified for preservation as a part of future projects.

Part A: Preserve America Initiative Criteria

To what degree does the project accomplish the following?

1. Protect or enhance **historic NOAA properties or heritage resources** (real property, instruments, documents, photographs, and other materials that have helped advance knowledge of the environment). (15 points)

This project will document, archive and preserve the heritage of Arctic projects within NOAA Research/OAR. This will be done by recording oral history interviews with participants in the following projects – OCSEAP, PROBES, MIZEX-West, CEAREX and other PMEL projects in the Arctic. These projects encompass much of NOAA's Arctic oceanographic research from the early 1970's through the 1990's. As funding permits, we will also interview participants in the Climate Monitoring and Diagnostics Laboratory's (CMDL) Barrow Observatory, which has been in operation since 1973, and the Air Resources Laboratory (ARL). We will also interview program managers who oversaw these programs.

While NOAA properties and resources are traditionally seen as tangible assets, we believe the *intangible* human assets of these projects are critical to determining their importance in historical context. These interviews will preserve the human memories of these projects and serve to enhance our knowledge of the history of these projects. In the process we will also locate and digitize whenever possible any ancillary materials, such as photographs and personal notebooks and correspondence, which the interviewees might hold. We will also digitize associated unpublished cruise reports and other related materials. The oral histories and existing information will be used to create a timeline of NOAA activities in the Arctic with descriptions of the projects, the geographic extent of the projects, participants, publications and the scientific discoveries of the projects. The results would be similar to the web pages created for the Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project (http://www.whoi.edu/beaufortgyre/history/history_modern.html). We will do so making full use of a small but significant number of historical studies that have begun to place the history of recent Arctic science in historical context.

2. Incorporate **unique local or regional cultural heritage.** (15 points)

NOAA's work in the Arctic differs from other NOAA efforts in a number of ways. The Arctic is a unique region that has spawned unique research programs within NOAA. Ice camps and other ephemeral stations, for example, are peculiar to the Arctic's research culture. The location of the work produces special types of research, different research conditions and a distinctive culture amongst the researchers working in the area. Joint research projects with Russian scientists provided one of the few opportunities for scientific cooperation with the Soviet Union during the Cold War and developed a specific culture, one which is unlikely to be repeated due to political changes in the past two decades. Our interviews will specifically target the aspects that made these research projects reflective of a time and location. By describing efforts such as the work at ice camps and on various research cruises, we will describe a regional research culture unique to the Arctic In linking to current efforts to combine western scientific research with traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) efforts, we also hope to link the histories we capture to the indigenous cultures in the Arctic and the Bering Sea region to create a richer, more comprehensive account.

3. Develop new partnerships or expand existing **partnerships.** (10 points) (Partnerships can be

within NOAA, external, or a combination.)

In a totally new partnership for NOAA, academic partners from Oregon State University (Doel) and MIT/New Mexico Tech (Harper) will provide oral history expertise. Exposure to formal historical research using oral histories will expand the expertise of NOAA and JISAO personnel. It will also provide an opportunity to build a new partnership between Seattle's NMML library and OAR/PMEL, which will allow PMEL to take advantage of the library's historical resources. The project will also build upon existing partnerships between OAR and NMFS, including previously funded data rescue and data access projects. These partnerships will be expanded to include new areas of research and collaboration, including the development of web resources.

4. Provide **economic benefits** by increasing educational and/or commercial value of NOAA assets and their accessibility to the public. (10 points) (Economic benefits include heritage tourism, developing a "sense of place" for local residents, dissemination of historical information or displays that may have tourism value, as well as direct economic benefits to a community)

This project will lead to the dissemination, via the web, of educational materials on NOAA's Arctic efforts. Very few people can ever hope to physically visit the sites of NOAA's Arctic research projects, but the dissemination of related educational materials over the Internet could potentially reach millions all around the world. Existing scientific data sets will be augmented by the addition of ancillary information that will help to place them in a historical context. We will also create a brief history of NOAA's efforts in the Arctic, which could become a part of a larger project to enhance the "sense of place" already held by local residents. This work could also be combined with efforts to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) into NOAA's scientific efforts. While the project will not have a direct economic benefit for communities such as Barrow, it will provide background information for studies of climate change, which is having a direct economic impact on these communities, and for increasing their knowledge of their scientific heritage.

5. Relate to **NOAA's mission** and current or historical efforts to fulfill that mission. (5 points)

By enhancing our knowledge of the historical, cultural and social contexts of earlier scientific efforts, this project relates to NOAA's mission to understand and predict change by enhancing our knowledge of the historical and social context of previous scientific efforts. Specifically, it will provide a unique view of past research in support of efforts to conserve and manage coastal and marine resources. This project will relate directly to the mission goals of "Protect, Restore and Manage…" and "Climate Variability" by detailing the history of past projects that addressed the core of these goals. Additionally, we will contribute to the cross-cutting efforts to integrate observations and data management by combining existing scientific datasets with newly gathered oral histories. By placing scientific work within an understandable historical and social context, we will be contributing to NOAA's environmental literacy efforts. And by providing audiences an opportunity to listen to the voices of scientists who worked in the Arctic in earlier times, we connect them directly to history.

Part B. Project Structure Criteria

1. Clearly and briefly describe a schedule or timeline for implementation, including progress

milestones, deliverables or products, and measures of success or accomplishment. Attach additional documentation as needed. (15 points)

This project has three main areas of concentration – the gathering of oral history interviews; the location/cataloging/digitization of unique and unpublished pictures and documents; and the creation of web pages encompassing digital versions of part or all of the interviews, the digital documents and a brief history of the research projects. While all three threads will be worked on simultaneously, some parts will require the completion of efforts in another thread to be complete. Interim milestones will include the completion of portions of the project needed by other aspects, e.g. the identification of pictures held by interviewees may then result in the digitization of these pictures. The measures of success will be the completion of these tasks and the usability of the products. The final measure of success will be the creation of a cohesive history of these research projects that encompasses a number of types of historical methods and makes a coherent and interesting result available to a wide audience.

Date	Milestones/deliverables
Month 1	Identify and document existing resources
Month 1	Identify oral history interview candidates
Month 2	Scan existing documents, files available to web page developers
Months 3-6	Conduct interviews - digitize and/or transcribe them
Month 6	Scan materials provided by interviewees
Month 7	Aggregate/combine datasets, create history and timeline of NOAA Arctic efforts
Month 8	Create web page – integrate with existing NOAA Arctic Theme Page
January 2006	Poster on the project presented at American Meteorological Society 2006 meeting. Present paper at the Presidential History Symposium.

Measures of success
Successful location of historical resources
Oral history interviews (OHI) conducted
(Parts of) interviews made public via digital format etc., complete interviews made available to researchers with permission of interviewees
Creation of a digital archive of interviews
Creation of successful website and use by public
Ability to tie our efforts to NOAA International Polar Year (IPY) efforts,
Possible expansion of OHI interviews to other projects with additional funding

2. Partnerships

a. What is the cost to implement the project? Include a budget breakdown showing amounts covered by NOAA funds, and amounts covered by partners, in the following categories: (10 points)

	NOAA	OSU/MIT	UW/JISAO	Notes
Facilities				
Equipment				
Supplies				
Labor				
NOAA personnel for	[$x]			

project management and development of research project histories				
OSU/MIT Contract to conduct oral history interviews	$x	[$x]		
JISAO Contract for web development	$x		[$x]	
General Support				
Travel to conduct interviews West Coast East Coast	$x			
Other				
Total	$25,000			
Matching funds	[$x]	$x	$x	

Briefly describe how the budget relates to project milestones, deliverables or products, and measures of success.

We are asking for labor funds for personnel to conduct the oral history interviews (OSU/MIT), to gather and digitize unique documents and historical photographs (UW/JISAO), to create the web pages that will integrate all of our efforts (UW/JISAO) and for travel to cover the travel costs of the two interviewers (OSU/MIT). Participation of the NOAA employee (Vance) overseeing the project and writing the history of the research projects will be covered from her line office. Participation of NOAA employee (Kromann) is also covered.

While the project point of contact (Vance) is currently a NMFS employee, she was a PMEL employee for many years and has worked with the personnel from the OAR projects in the Arctic. She also has contact with the OSU and MIT/NM personnel through being a graduate student at Oregon State. Having worked with all three groups, she will be well suited to coordinate the activities of the NOAA, Joint Institute and university personnel.

b. Attach letters of support specifically describing level of participation from all partners listed, and points of contact. (5 points)

Attached

3. Describe new or enhanced crosscutting opportunities within NOAA. (5 points)

This project will allow us to develop two new crosscutting opportunities. The first would be a general opportunity to develop and expand efforts to link historical scientific data with more general historical documentation and preservation of unique materials such as pictures and unpublished reports. This project would encompass NMFS/OAR/NESDIS. The second opportunity, and the more important crosscutting project for NOAA, would be to develop

expertise in oral history and apply these techniques to various aspects of the heritage and corporate history of NOAA. We envisage this project as a prototype both for techniques and for the development of continuing collaborations between [OAR/NMFS/NESDIS]/OSU/MIT/NMT. The results of this project could serve to set a format for creating oral histories of other NOAA projects. We plan to create a team that would be able to go on to work with other projects within NOAA and other line offices.

4. What is the magnitude and diversity of the audience for the project? (5 points)

Our audience includes the general public, students, historians, NOAA management and scientific researchers. The combination of oral histories with historical information and scientific data will provide a view of NOAA's human heritage and ancillary information needed to provide a complete picture of our research efforts in the Arctic. Making the results of the project available via a web page will expand the audience beyond that for a purely academic project. Integrating the results with the existing NOAA Arctic-related theme pages (www.Arctic.noaa.gov) will link our efforts with well known and award winning web pages already used by a large number of diverse users. With the development of NOAA efforts related to the upcoming International Polar Year in 2007-2008, the audience for this project will significantly increase.

5. If this project could be expanded to require further funding beyond this first cycle, briefly describe how. (5 points)

We are asking for funding to develop a prototype of an oral history/web page development project within NOAA. As such, we have chosen to concentrate on a single geographical area of research and on projects from one or two NOAA research laboratories. With further funding we would hope to be able to develop similar oral history projects for other NOAA activities. Specifically, we would expand the project to representative National Weather Service regions (NW, SW, Great Plains, etc.) to capture the history of the changes in disciplinary practice during the twentieth century by interviewing current and retired observers and forecasters. Such interviews would serve as the basis for future work to analyze the culture of operational meteorology in the United States and to preserve artifacts that have been kept by former employees and current forecast office personnel that shed light on the importance of weather support to the nation.

If further funding were to become available, in additional years we would expand to other NOAA research projects, such as the TOGA-TAO project in the tropical Pacific, where interviews with participants are still possible and where these types of interviews could provide a better understanding of the history and development of the research. These additional research project candidates could also include NOAA activities such as the HAZMAT remediation work at Adak and the Pribilofs, climate model development and marine mammal monitoring efforts in the Arctic and Antarctic.

Part C. Uncaptured Elements

Briefly highlight any unique aspects of this project that have not been adequately described above. (up to 20 bonus points possible)

While the traditional view of preserving NOAA's historical resources probably concentrates on tangible aspects such as shipwrecks and paper records, the intangible aspect of the memories of participants in unique research projects is no less important. The gathering of oral histories provides two opportunities – the preservation of the personal aspects of projects, as opposed to the official history of a project, and the opportunity to identify resources, such as pictures, personal journals, and correspondence that are in the possession of participants. A joint approach to gather the oral histories and to identify materials for preservation will provide an expanded opportunity to preserve a part of NOAA's heritage.

Historical work that has been done thus far in the Arctic has been scattered and uneven. There has been some work on particular expeditions, including polar expeditions. Most studies of polar science – including oral history programs – have focused on the Antarctic. An exception is the University of Alaska Fairbanks oral history effort. A few studies exist of Point Barrow [NARL] and the Geophysical Institute at UAF; a group of historians has begun to focus on aspects of Arctic science research, including the fourth Maury Conference on the History of [Polar] Oceanography, and other work underway of investigations of magnetic north. But vast areas of activity remain little explored by historians. Interviews done with scientists involved in Arctic studies – many of whom hold unpublished materials in their possession of great potential value for future work – remain limited and sporadic and few interviews have been done with glaciologists or with researchers on the early ice flow studies. Despite its tremendous importance for the earth sciences, there are surprisingly few oral history interviews with individuals involved in the IGY of 1957-58.

This project will incorporate both a unique region (the Arctic) and unique research projects (both past scientific projects and current interdisciplinary collaborations between historians and contemporary researchers). NOAA's work in the Arctic differs from other NOAA efforts in a number of ways. For studies undertaken in the field—in contrast to lab science—the location of the work matters a great deal. In borderland regions with sharp political tensions, location can affect what research can be achieved and what questions can be pursued. During the Cold War, the Arctic was a unique trading ground between U.S. and Soviet scientists, where formidable political tensions were occasionally punctuated by contacts and informal cooperation far more difficult to achieve in other regions. Joint research projects with Russian scientists during the Cold War offer a unique perspective on how Arctic research was pursued despite heightened tensions—an era rapidly fading from memory since the Soviet Union disintegrated in the early 1990s. Our interviews thus will specifically target what made these research projects reflective of a time and location: by describing efforts such as the work at ice camps and other ephemeral stations, we will describe a regional research culture unique to the Arctic.