

To Boldly Preserve: "Starting's the Hard Part..."

Linda Edgerly, The Winthrop Group, Inc.

Summary/Discussion Points

1. The "To Boldly Preserve" initiative has significant appeal and potential and fortunately has attracted start-up resources from the National Science Foundation. However, achieving its long-term goals will require a broad collaborative -- most especially one in which 'the Space Community' includes entrepreneurs and corporations from the start.
2. The significant outcomes of the 1989 Smithsonian conference on the Glennan-Webb-Seamans Project for Research in Space History, long as they were in the making, resulted in part from what was a determined group of people (i.e., professionals in archives and records management, museums, science, and history) combined with government agencies and far from least, a Support Group that included the corporate community.
3. Given the importance of corporations in space flight and exploration, what factors in the planning of the conference have resulted in a near-complete absence of representation from the business and entrepreneurial sector among the conference speakers? Moreover, how can the Conference gathering be considered one of 'the Space Community' without them?
4. Going forward what outreach and advocacy efforts, beyond publication of the proceedings by Texas A&M, can be launched to attract the participation and resources of business, both of which will be necessary to accomplish timely and sustainable results? It is essential that those who are carrying the "To Boldly Preserve" message can articulate in business terms what the potential benefits are.

5. TBP planners and participants will need to accept that many of the ‘new space exploration’ documentation and information resources will remain closed to scholars and historians for varying periods of time. Nevertheless, the next steps toward building on what is accomplished at the TBP Conference should include:
 - a. undertaking a preliminary survey within the ‘new space exploration’ business entities to identify the types of information and protocols would be useful to those who have responsibility for the information and documentary assets at present.
 - b. defining the role oral history should have in capturing the ‘story’ and assessing the variety of impacts it can have. (This is important because the debate continues about whether oral history’s main purpose is more the preservation of stories than development of a clear picture and/or a fact-based and insightful narrative. In other words, the level of preparation and the expertise with which the oral history interviews are conducted can have a substantial impact on the quality of the outcomes.)
 - c. enlisting the assistance of professional groups or associations that can or may be able to assist, e.g., the Aerospace Industry Association (a lobbying group), the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA), the Business Archives Section of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), the Business History Conference, etc.