



Institute Archives and Special Collections
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Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139-4307

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J. H. SALTZER

4 May 1994

TO: Professor Fernando J. Corbato
Professor Peter Elias
Professor Albert R. Meyer
✓ Professor Jerome H. Saltzer

FROM: Helen W. Samuels *hws*

RE: LCS research records projects

On April 1 the Institute Archives commenced work on the second phase of our project to organize and preserve the records of the Laboratory for Computer Science. We were very grateful to receive funding from Professor Dertouzos for this additional six months and very pleased that he asked you to advise this part of the project. I thank you for your willingness to assist us.

Phase one, which was also funded by LCS, was devoted to gathering and organizing the **administrative records of the laboratory**. Jeffrey Mifflin, hired by the Archives for both of these projects, brought together the directors' and associate directors' files, as well as general administrative files. The description of this collection will be sent to you in the near future.

The goal of phase two is to document the **research activities of the laboratory**. Jeff has already surveyed the research records, and we will give you a list of the projects we have identified and the volume of material for each project. As we currently have funding for only six months, we propose to start with the Multics and MACSYMA records and include the small amount of material on CTSS and the Mathlab since they are related to these two large projects. These records comprise about 75 cubic feet.

Our work in this phase of the project will proceed a bit differently from the first phase:

- Jeff will survey and describe the published records (including technical reports, working papers, theses, journal articles, and monographs) that are housed in the LCS and Libraries collections for each project.
- Jeff will then survey the administrative and research records for additional information about the research process.

The records exist in many formats and were created (and then stored) by many LCS members. Our task will be to work with you to evaluate these records and determine just what portion needs to be preserved so that a useful record will exist for those who want to study this work in the future. While Jeff and I have the archival expertise to address the care and preservation of records on paper, we look to you and your colleagues to help us solve the problems associated with capturing a record of machine-readable systems. The resulting documentary record will, I believe, reside partly in paper form and partly in electronic form.

These are the issues, then, that we want to discuss with you:

- What is an adequate record of your research, particularly the development and running of a software system?
- What information is supplied by the published, administrative, and research records?
- What should we know about the development and running of these systems that we do **not** know from the records we have? What will we not know without locating or creating additional records?
- What part of the record must exist in machine-readable form?

The problem of how to document the development and application of software is not unique to MIT. As I have consulted with my colleagues at other institutions, I realized that they will value learning about our findings and our recommendations.

We will try to minimize the time that we ask of you. After our initial survey work, I would like to have a brief meeting with you to get your advice and agree on the rest of the schedule. I will contact your office in the near future to see if we can meet in May. Again my thanks, and I look forward to working with you.

cc: Michael Dertouzos
Jay K. Lucker