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# A Profile of the Technical Information Division at Brookhaven National Laboratory

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## **A PROFILE OF THE TECHNICAL INFORMATION DIVISION AT BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY**

**By Diane C. Mirvis**

### **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The Technical Information Division (TID) at Brookhaven National Laboratory is charged with two goals: automate and centralize information activities throughout the site. This mission drives such functionally diverse projects as implementing an integrated library system, creating a full-text Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) database, tracking internal publications electronically, and maintaining an online telephone directory.

The Laboratory itself sits on 5,000 wooded acres on Long Island, about an hour and a half by car from New York City. As a multi-disciplinary research institution, our facilities include nuclear reactors, a small medical hospital, and very large user facilities like the National Synchrotron Light Source and the Alternating Gradient Synchrotron. Research needs span the range from physics to structural biology to global climate studies. Two major information clearinghouses also reside at Brookhaven. Both the Protein Data Bank and the National Nuclear Data Center are very active centers for bibliographic research. Each maintains databases that are accessible worldwide.

TID is comprised of twenty-two associates arranged in a variety of teams to support editorial, publications and library services on-site. Individuals rotate assignments to bring fresh perspectives to procedures and policies. The last four

years have seen a major change in the structure of our department. The organization chart has been flattened, there has been a strong move to team orientation, and members are matrixing out to work more directly with clientele.

Our advisory group, the Research Library Advisory Committee (RLAC), has been pivotal in revitalizing TID at the Laboratory. Appointed in 1989, ten senior members from scientific departments have worked in collaboration with the Division Manager to develop a mission statement and set policies that accurately reflect researcher needs. The Committee is a strong voice for the scientific community, reflecting both its concerns and satisfactions.

### **COMPUTERS**

Working closely with the Committee, TID has grown appreciably in the last few years, both in scope and physical resources. Automation drives most of our efforts to provide cost effective and high quality service. We first installed BASIS Plus and TECHLIB Plus software in 1989. The installation has grown from a shared disk on a VAX 11/785 to our fourth platform in three years, a dedicated Sunsparc 490 with twelve gigabytes of storage. We offer a number of databases, some bibliographic and some full-text. This winter we hope to develop our first image application, providing editorial process for the creation as well as storage

of nuclear reactor manuals that will include full-text indexing and schematics.

Our INFORM system serves as an electronic backbone to over 8100 registered users and is available on the Ethernet network on-site. Our non-proprietary databases have been available via Internet for the last three years, and we now have users from four continents. Our system address is [suntid.bnl.gov](http://suntid.bnl.gov) (at the login prompt, type `brookhaven` in small letters). There is even a messaging option built into the system by hitting the "Suggestion" option. Be sure to say "hi" if you visit us electronically!

### COLLECTIONS AND COMPUTERIZED PRODUCTS

When we speak of centralizing at Brookhaven we are most concerned with providing intellectual access, creating a virtual library of information resources and publishing guides. But we are also smack in the middle of a physical renovation that will increase our stack space by 40% and allow the merge back into the central library of two department-based collections. We currently purchase and catalog a collection of approximately 80,000 books, and 1800 serial titles.

Our CD-ROM products have grown to 21 from 11 last year. We also mount several weeks of the Current Contents Science tapes with cited references on INFORM. Researchers can either browse themselves or set up automatic SDI's each week that will download search results to their own research files. Entries are profiled with our journal holdings on-site so researchers can immediately see if we subscribe to the journal. If we don't, a screen option lets users place an

immediate request either for traditional ILL or fee-based document delivery from the Institute for Scientific Information. In keeping with our philosophy of direct service to users, we support end-user database training on our site and encourage scientists to search directly. Our clientele are very sophisticated information consumers and producers, and are accordingly information literate. They often tell TID staff about new products and services within their own discipline areas.

There was one point this fall when we had two forty-foot trailers parked in the lot, the periodical section was gutted with dozens of workers installing new shelving, and a twenty-foot dumpster stood out front. The only way you could reach the Library was over a wooden drawbridge covering the trench that had been dug to bring fiber optics to the building. Some people thought this was the worst of times, others the best of times—but everyone agrees it is certainly an exciting time to be in the information arena at Brookhaven National Laboratory.

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Diane C. Mirvis is Directory of the Technical Information Division, Bldg. 477A, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, NY 11973. She has the MLS degree from Wayne State University and the B.A. degree in anthropology from the University of Michigan. Her career has taken her from serving in newspaper libraries to being a member of the faculty at Wayne State University, and managing a corporate computer operations center. She has served as a consultant to a

number of organizations, chiefly in the fields of automation of information services. She is active in SLA, serving as Chair of the Nuclear Science Division for 1992-93.

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#### Corrections

In the August 1992 issue, p.3, the first paragraph should have read: The \$5,000,000 modern library was officially dedicated on September 14, 1990.

In the April 1992 issue, p. 51, paragraph 8 should have read: There is some confusion over the respective roles of the Awards Committee and the Student Relations Committee relating to the Travel Stipend.



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