

**THE NIELS BOHR ARCHIVE**  
**Annual Report 1997**

<b>Staff</b>	Director	Finn Aaserud
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	Programming	Felicity Pors
	Miscellaneous	Claus Wøller Nordbo
	Scientific Staff	Hilde Levi
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For the family of Niels Bohr	Christian Bohr (until 7 Oct) Anne Bohr Dawids (from 7 Oct)

**General remarks**

The Niels Bohr Archive (NBA) is a repository of primary material for the history of modern physics, pertaining in particular to the early development of quantum mechanics and the life and career of Niels Bohr. The NBA has existed since shortly after Bohr's death

in 1962. However, its future was only secured at the centennial of Bohr's birth in 1985, when a deed of gift from Bohr's wife, Margrethe, provided the opportunity to establish the NBA as an independent non-profit institution. The NBA now has its own board of directors, receives a fixed annual sum for running expenses from the Danish Ministry of Education and may apply for project support from private sources. Having housed the NBA from the outset, in 1990 the Niels Bohr Institute supplied improved and expanded quarters.

The core of the collections comprises Bohr's scientific correspondence (6000 letters and drafts) and manuscripts (500 units). This material was catalogued and microfilmed in the early 1960s as part of the Archive for History of Quantum Physics (AHQP), a project sponsored by the American Philosophical Society and the American Physical Society. Since then, 290 microfilms of a wide variety of relevant historical material have been placed in several repositories world-wide.

In addition, the NBA houses several historical collections that cannot be consulted elsewhere. Thus, in 1985 the Bohr family donated the bulk of Bohr's private correspondence, which includes letters to and from central personalities in culture and politics inside and outside Denmark. The equally extensive "Bohr General Correspondence" documents Bohr's substantial administrative involvement. Bohr's family correspondence will become available to researchers in 2012.

Among papers of Bohr's closest colleagues deposited in the NBA, only the George Hevesy Scientific Correspondence has been organized and microfilmed, but the

correspondence of among others H.A. Kramers, Christian Møller, Oskar Klein, and Léon Rosenfeld is also of great historical interest. The large collection of photographs relating to Bohr's career is an especially popular resource. Finally, there are reprint, film, sound tape and video tape collections, as well as a growing library.

### **Activities in 1997**

The NBA's highest priority continues to be the publication – by Elsevier Science – of the *Niels Bohr Collected Works*, the first volume of which appeared in 1972. A complete list of all eleven volumes, published as well as planned, was given in the Activities Report for 1988. Two volumes in the series remain to be published: volume 10, *Complementarity Beyond Physics*, edited by David Favrholt, professor of philosophy at the University of Odense, is now in proof stage and will be published in 1998; volume 11, edited by Finn Aaserud, will cover Bohr's activities outside science and philosophy, prominently including some of Bohr's previously unpublished writings on his idea of an "open world," developed during and after World War II.

The second main activity consists of organizing, registering and preserving the several uncatalogued collections. This work has to a great extent been paid by outside grants, notably a three-year grant from the Mellon Foundation, which expired this year and has enabled us to prepare brief descriptions of each of the NBA's many collections. At the end of the year the Lounsbery Foundation provided a grant which will enable us to place this

information, as well as a substantial part of our photo collection, on the World Wide Web. The latter task will be performed on equipment paid for by an earlier grant from the same foundation.

Substantial work has been done toward preparing for publication the dissertation of NBA's Ph.D. student, Carten Jensen, who died in 1991. The book, *Controversy and Consensus: Nuclear Beta Decay 1911–1934*—co-edited by Finn Aaserud, Helge Kragh, Erik Rüdinger and Helge Kragh—will be published by Birkhäuser.

Finn Aaserud attended the XXth International Congress of History of Science in Liège, where he contributed to a session on archives of contemporary science. He was also invited to a workshop at Union College in Schenectady, New York, on “Science and Political Ideology,” in which he took part.

There have been six lectures in the NBA's History of Science Seminar. Last but not least, several researchers from many countries have visited the NBA.

## **Publications**

F. Aaserud:

Nogle indtryk fra den 20. internationale videnskabshistoriekongres i Liège 21.–26. juli 1997.

Roskilde: Nyhedsbrev. Åbent Netværk for Videnskabshistorie og Videnskabsfilosofi, nummer 16, september 1997.

A. Pais:

A Tale of Two Continents, Princeton University Press  
and Oxford University Press, 1997

P. Rubinin, Y. Gaponov and F. Aaserud:

New insight on the visit of Ya.P. Terletsy to N. Bohr in  
1945. (In Russian).

Proceedings of International Scientific Symposium on Sci-  
ence and Society: History of the Soviet Atomic Project  
(40s and 50s), Dubna, Russia, 14-18 May 1996, Moscow:  
IZDAT, 1997