

NASA HISTORY: 1995 IN REVIEW

The year 1995 was productive for the History Office at NASA Headquarters. This program was established in 1959 to preserve and disseminate a record of agency activities for the public interest. Our efforts continued during 1995 toward building a significant collection of reference documents for use by both NASA personnel and the public; providing historical perspective and documentary support for agency executives; and researching and writing NASA history for publication in books, monographs, articles, and reports.

Reference Collection and Research Support:

During the year the NASA Historical Reference Collection answered a total of 2,670 research requests from government, educational, and private organizations on all manner of divergent research interests. A priority during the year was providing background information and documentary records to aid NASA decision-makers in their work, an "applied history" goal, and of the total number of research requests answered, 1338 were from NASA personnel or other official requesters. This required a total number of 1,408 work hours by the office staff. Also during the fiscal year, the History Office provided research services to 533 on-site researchers using its collections. The office also wrote several background papers on such topics as NASA roles and missions, NASA organization and staffing, and international relations.

(a) Members of the History Office staff worked closely with an inter-agency Task Force on Space Policy to conduct research and help prepare a set of policy directives for the Clinton Administration.

(b) NASA history staff members worked closely with a subgroup of the NAS/NRC Space Studies Board for a study of the Future of Space Science. This led to a major report issued by the National Academy of Sciences.

(c) Office personnel prepared background studies and participated in briefings and working groups discussing the development of technology transfer strategies for governmental scientific and technological agencies in the twentieth century as a means of enhancing present-day NASA efforts in this arena.

(d) NASA history personnel provided background information for a multi-organization "Space for America" committee. This organization, sponsored by several professional societies associated with spaceflight, prepared a report to aid in the development of a space policy agenda for the next century.

(e) NASA historians prepared an analysis of NSPD #1 (1989) on space policy for an ongoing Space Policy Review, pointing out elements in the policy statement that conflicted with subsequent space policy or with funding decisions by Congress.

One ongoing effort in the office has been the creation of a computer-based inventory and finding aid for NASA's historical reference collection. Beforehand, the only one who knew the contents of the collection in any detail was our archivist, Lee D. Saegesser. This computer database work is being done under contract in this office. With more than 1,500 linear feet of material now catalogued--still only about a two-thirds of the total holdings in the collection--the

data base is fulfilling its promise as an important reference tool to historians working in the NASA collections. We are planning to expand this effort in the near term by imaging some documents for electronic storage and retrieval. This will enable us to more effectively meet the needs of NASA executives for whom we provide information and to reduce the amount of paper documentation maintained on site at NASA headquarters.

Publication Program:

The hallmark of the NASA history program continued in 1995, as previously, to be the preparation of solid, well-researched works on the history of the U.S. civil space program. During the year the NASA History Program published several major new books and other less ambitious publications.

Books

- Noordung, Hermann. *The Problem of Space Travel: The Rocket Motor*. Ernst Stuhlinger, and J.D. Hunley, with Jennifer Garland. Editors. (Washington, DC: NASA SP-4026, 1995).
- Hansen, James R. *Spaceflight Revolution: NASA Langley Research Center from Sputnik to Apollo* (Washington, DC: NASA SP-4308, 1995).
- Logsdon, John M. Logsdon, with Lear, Linda J., Warren-Findley, Jannelle, Williamson, Ray A., and Day, Dwayne A. *Exploring the Unknown: Selected Documents in the History of the U.S. Civil Space Program, Volume I: Organizing for Exploration*. (NASA SP-4407, 1995).

NASA-Sponsored Historical Works Published By Other Presses

- Lambright, W. Henry. *Powering Apollo: James E. Webb of NASA* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).
- Launius, Roger D. Editor. *Organizing for the Use of Space: Historical Perspectives on a Persistent Issue* (Univelt, Inc., AAS History Series, Vol. 18, 1995).

Contractor Reports and Technical Memoranda

- Compton, W. David. "The Flight of Apollo 13" (Background paper for Public Affairs Office issued at the time of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Apollo 13, 1995).
- Launius, Roger D. "The Flight of Apollo-Soyuz" (Background paper for Public Affairs Office issued at the time of the twentieth anniversary of the

Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, 1995).

- Launius, Roger D. "Chronology of Selected Highlights in the First 100 American Human Spaceflights, 1961-1995" (Background paper for Public Affairs Office issued at the time of the hundredth U.S. human space flight, 1995).

Monographs in Aerospace History

- Hansen, James R. *Enchanted Rendezvous: John C. Houbolt and the Genesis of the Lunar-Orbit Rendezvous Concept* (Monographs in Aerospace History, No. 4, 1995).

NASA History Office Annual Reports

- *NASA Pocket Statistics, 1995 Edition* (Washington, DC: NASA Annual Report, 1995).
- *Aeronautics and Space Report of the President, Fiscal Year 1994 Activities* (Washington, DC: NASA Annual Report, 1995).

NASA Historical Publications in the News:

Powering Apollo: James E. Webb of NASA ("New Series in NASA History," the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), by W. Henry Lambright, has enjoyed an exceptionally fine reception. It recently received excellent reviews in *Science* and *Air & Space/Smithsonian*. In *Science* for 14 July 1995, Alex Roland, professor of history at Duke University, commented that Lambright has written a "spare yet informative biography." He describes the career of James Webb, noting that "his great ambition, [was] to manage public enterprise....Webb was equal to the task."

Roland concludes: "Today, when 'bureaucrat' has become a pejorative term, James Webb's history is instructive. This consummate bureaucrat managed a team of 400,000 people in one of the great technical achievements of this or any other time. He reached the moon by sheer energy, will, and hard work. He gave to his country better than he got. This fine biography will keep his memory warm until a better day when he and Apollo may look more important than they do now."

Martin Collins, writing for August/September 1995 issue of *Air & Space/Smithsonian*, also thought Lambright's administrative biography of worth. He finds that *Powering Apollo* is a "singular contribution to our understanding of the most dominant figure of the Space Age."

Spaceflight Revolution: NASA Langley Research Center from Sputnik to Apollo, by James R. Hansen, published in 1995 as NASA SP-4308 in the NASA History Series, has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. One of the most significant historical studies to emerge about NASA in recent years, it analyzes the dramatic changes taking place at one aeronautical research laboratory as a result of the commitment of the United States to engage the Soviet Union in a race to the Moon. It is must reading for anyone seeking to understand the development of

aerospace activities in the United States.

Spaceflight Revolution is one of a series of histories presently underway by the NASA History Office dealing with the development of NASA institutional structure. It joins volumes that have appeared on other NASA centers--Ames, Dryden, Johnson, and Lewis--as well as an earlier volume on Langley that deals with its activities under the NACA.

New Historical Publications Underway:

Also during the year, NASA historians worked toward the publication of several other histories on a wide diversity of subjects. Here is a list of major projects presently nearing completion, along with projected publication dates. The dates of publication, of course, may slip due to the exigencies of funding.

- Butrica, Andrew J. *To See the Unseen: A History of Planetary Radar Astronomy* (NASA SP-4217, 1996).

- Logsdon, John M. General Editor. With Lear, Linda J.; Warren-Findley, Janelle; Williamson, Ray A.; and Day, Dwayne. *Exploring the Unknown: Selected Documents in the History of the U.S. Civil Space Program, Volume II, Relations with Other Organizations* (NASA SP-4407, 1996).

- Schorn, Ronald A. *Phoenix: NASA and the Rebirth of Planetary Astronomy* (NASA SP-4218, 1996).

- Seamans, Robert C., Jr. *Aiming at Targets: The Autobiography of a Technological Manager*. (NASA 4106, 1996).

- Tatarewicz, Joseph N. *Exploring the Solar System: The History of Planetary Geosciences Since Galileo* ("New Series in NASA History," Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

Apollo 13 Twenty-fifth Anniversary:

This office was involved in several activities relative to the anniversary and film "Apollo 13." In addition to those already mentioned, they include the following:

- (a). We prepared a short article, "The Flight of Apollo 13," for use by the Public Affairs Office. This has been distributed through media channels for publication wherever appropriate.

- (b). The NASA History Office was heavily involved in the development of the Ron Howard/Tom Hanks movie, *Apollo 13*. Astronaut Jim Lovell, Commander of Apollo 13, first contacted the NASA History Office's archivist Lee D. Saegesser in December 1992 with several reference requests in conjunction with his memoirs. Both Lovell and his co-author, Jeff Kluger, used

the office's extensive collection of Apollo 13 interviews, flight transcripts, and assorted materials in February 1993. When *Lost Moon: The Perilous Voyage of Apollo 13* appeared in local bookstores in mid-1994, office personnel were delighted.

(c). Later in the year, we learned that the film rights to the book had been sold and Lee Saegesser began to be inundated with requests for information concerning the Apollo Command Module, Lunar Module, and Saturn V by the company handling special effects for the film. We also became involved in providing technical information to several other people and companies working on various aspects of the film's production. For instance, we provided reference material to a company developing and marketing a CD-ROM containing complete information about the Apollo 13 flight, accident, and investigation. We continue to provide large amounts of data to media, the public, and others about the flight of Apollo 13 in conjunction with the movie release.

Professional Activities:

Members of the History Office staff were involved at several levels in professional activities germane to the aerospace history specialty. The first area was as a participant in various professional conferences. Dr. Roger D. Launius and Dr. J.D. Hunley each participated in conferences and symposia during the year, giving papers and participating in panels. Several staff members also published historical books, articles, and book reviews during the year. A total of 27 articles, one monograph, and several book reviews were published by members of the staff during the year.

AHA Fellowship in Aerospace History:

The American Historical Association awarded one fellowship for the 1994-1995; NASA funds this program as a means of fostering serious scholarship in aerospace history. The fellow is Eric C. Rau, a Ph.D. candidate in the history of technology from the University of Pennsylvania. He spent his fellowship term researching the management of large-scale technological projects.

Conference Sessions and Symposia:

During 1995 the NASA History Office sponsored several sessions at major historical conferences. First it sponsored a session for the Society for History in the Federal Government annual meeting at Archives II, NARA, College Park, MD, March 27-28, 1995. The session was entitled, "Challenges in Writing Recent History: Space Policy and Technology as a Case Study," involved papers on "Methodological Problems in the Early History of Rocketry and Missiles," J.D. Hunley, NASA Staff Historian; "The Air Force and the Challenge of Space, 1945-1960: Pioneers in Strategic Space Thinking," George W. Bradley III, Command Historian, USAF Space Command, Peterson AFB, CO; and "The Air Force in Space: Research Opportunities and Challenges," David N. Spires, University of Colorado at Boulder.

The History Office organized and participated in a major session for the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) entitled, "Eisenhower and Sputnik: Reconsiderations of a Cold War Crisis." It included the following papers: "Framing American Astronautics to Serve National Security: Eisenhower, Open Skies, and Freedom of Space," R. Cargill Hall, Center for Air Force History, Washington, DC; "No Race for Prestige: Eisenhower's Response to Sputnik," Derek W. Elliott, Tennessee State University; and "Eisenhower, Sputnik, and the Creation of NASA: Technological Elites and Public Policy Agenda Setting," Roger D. Launius, NASA. Commenting on the papers was Ken Hechler, Secretary of State of West Virginia and Robert A. Divine, University of Texas at Austin. The moderator was Janelle Warren-Findley, Arizona State University.

The office also had sessions at the joint meeting of the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) and the Society for the Social Studies of Science (4S) held in Charlottesville, VA, on 19-22 October 1995. At the SHOT meeting NASA personnel organized sessions entitled, "That Solid Rising Sensation: German and American Rocket Development," and "Recent Studies on Western European Space Activities." The 4S meeting had a session with NASA historians entitled "Political Construction of Technological Systems: The Case of Space Exploration."

The History Office also organized a history session for the annual meeting of the American Astronautical Society in December 1995. Entitled "Space Exploration: From the Past into the Next Millennium," the session involved Charles D. Walker, McDonnell-Douglas Corp.; Howard E. McCurdy, University of Washington; Michael D. Griffin, Space Industries International; and Valerie Neal, National Air and Space Museum to reflect on the issue of space exploration and place it in the broader context of the history and development of exploration of the Earth.

Finally, during the year the NASA History Office sponsored a major symposium on the history of satellite communications. October 1995 marked the fiftieth anniversary of Arthur C. Clarke's article in *Wireless World* in which he proposed the use of satellites placed in geosynchronous orbit for communications relay sites. To commemorate, the NASA History Office held on 17-18 October 1995 a historical symposium entitled, "Beyond the Ionosphere: The Development of Satellite Communications," at the NASA Headquarters Auditorium. Scholars from around the world gathered for an in-depth examination of the field from its origins to its current status. Presentations were offered by historians, political scientists, sociologists, and other social scientists from Australia, India, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Canada, and Latin America. With about 75 people in attendance, the meeting proved exceptionally worthwhile for all concerned. It proved a useful means of drawing together differing perspectives on this important space technology and of furthering understanding about its origins and development. The NASA History Office is now preparing the presentations for publication in a book that further enhance the value of the effort.

Personnel Changes:

After almost four years in the NASA History Office, J.D. Hunley, known to all as Dill, is departing effective August 20, 1995, for the Dryden Flight Research Center (DFRC), where he will work in the Office of External Affairs as the DFRC historian and will also do public

affairs work. Besides preparing the annual *Aeronautics and Space Report of the President*, Dill has edited *The Birth of NASA: The Diary of T. Keith Glennan*, coedited *The Problem of Space Travel: The Rocket Motor*, a translation of Hermann Noordung's classic early discussion of the engineering aspects of a space station with related treatment of other matters concerning space travel, and helped compile *An Annotated Bibliography of the Apollo Program*. He has written several articles, including "The Enigma of Robert H. Goddard," *Technology and Culture* 36 (April 1995): 327-50, and he has helped edit several of the recent and forthcoming NASA publications. Dill has been an enormous asset for the NASA History Office over the last four years, offering stability and reflectiveness as well as superb historical skills. We will miss him, and consider the move positive for the History Office only insofar that we will continue to work with him in his role as Dryden historian.

His replacement in the NASA History Office is Steve Garber, who comes here from the NASA Office of Space Science, where among other duties, he contributed to last year's *Aeronautics and Space Report of the President*. Steve has a strong background in research, writing, and editing and wrote several reports on aerospace topics while on a Presidential Management Intern rotation at the Congressional Research Service. He has a Master's degree in public and international affairs and a strong research interest. Steve is already beginning to work on the aeronautics and space report and to do research in several other areas. We welcome him to the office.

In addition, Jennifer Skerrett, who had been working in this office as a contract archivist since last winter, left her work in July 1995 to pursue graduate studies. She was replaced in the office by Colin Fries, who started with the NASA History Office archival project on 1 August 1995. Colin has both a B.A. and an M.A. in history from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He also received a Masters in Library Science from the University of Hawaii. His previous experience included an internship at the National Archives and a position as an archivist with the Hawaii State Archives.

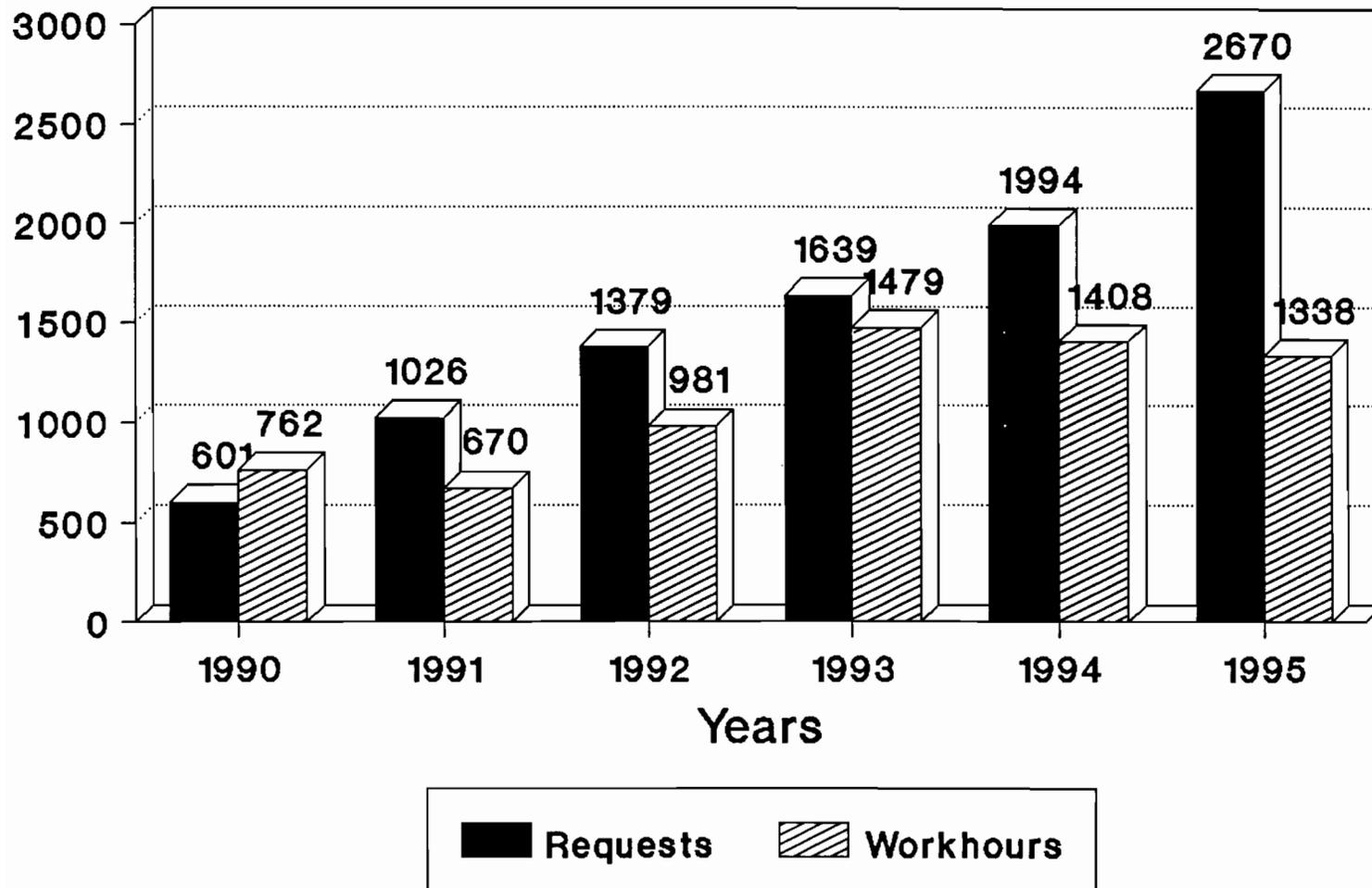
Finally, after more than six years, contract archivist William Skerrett left the NASA History Office for a position with the Department of Immigration and Naturalization. He had been an excellent resource for the office staff, and many researchers relied on his understanding of the NASA Historical Reference Collection computerized finding aid to identify materials for use.

Roger D. Launius
NASA Chief Historian
January 16, 1996

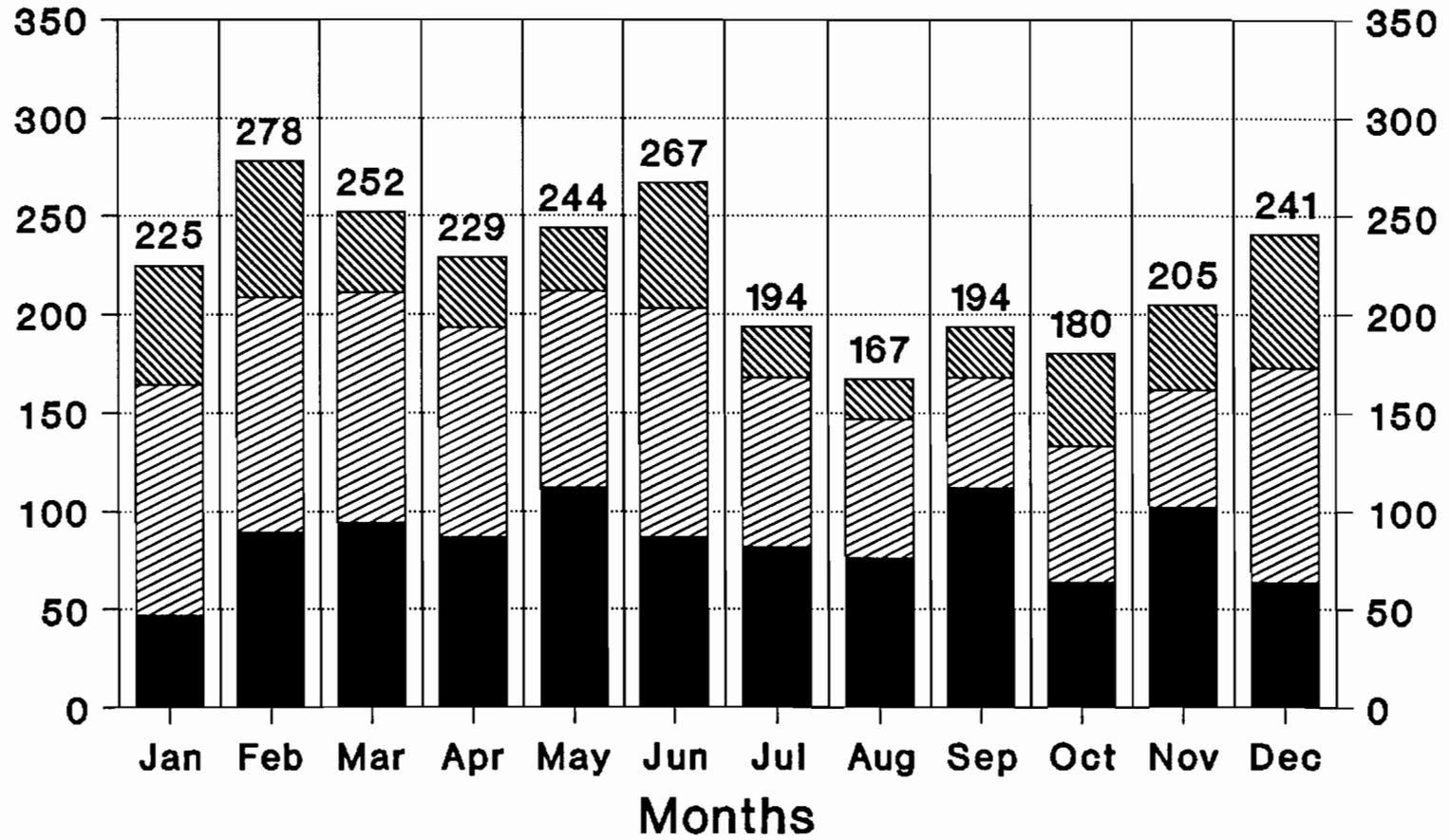
Attachments:

1. NASA History Office Information Requests Comparison, 1990-1995
2. Requests in 1995
3. Major NASA History Program Elements in 1995

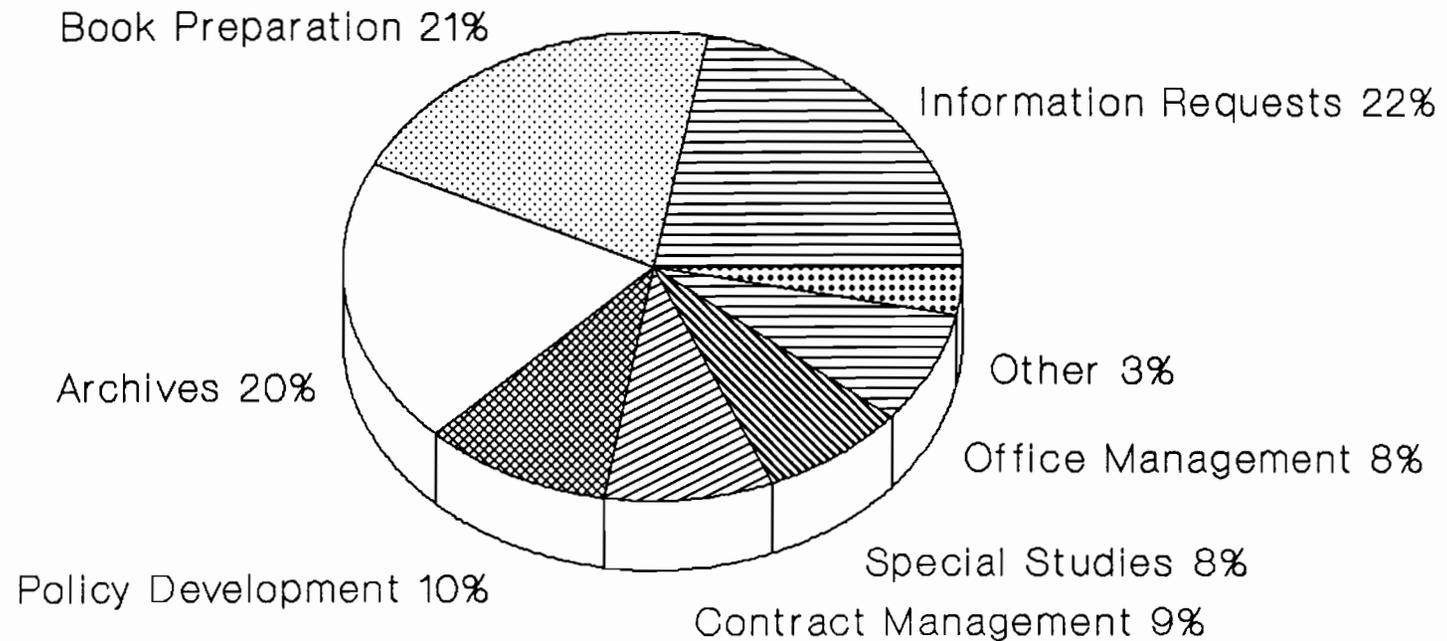
NASA HISTORY OFFICE INFORMATION REQUESTS COMPARISON, 1990-1995



REQUESTS IN 1995

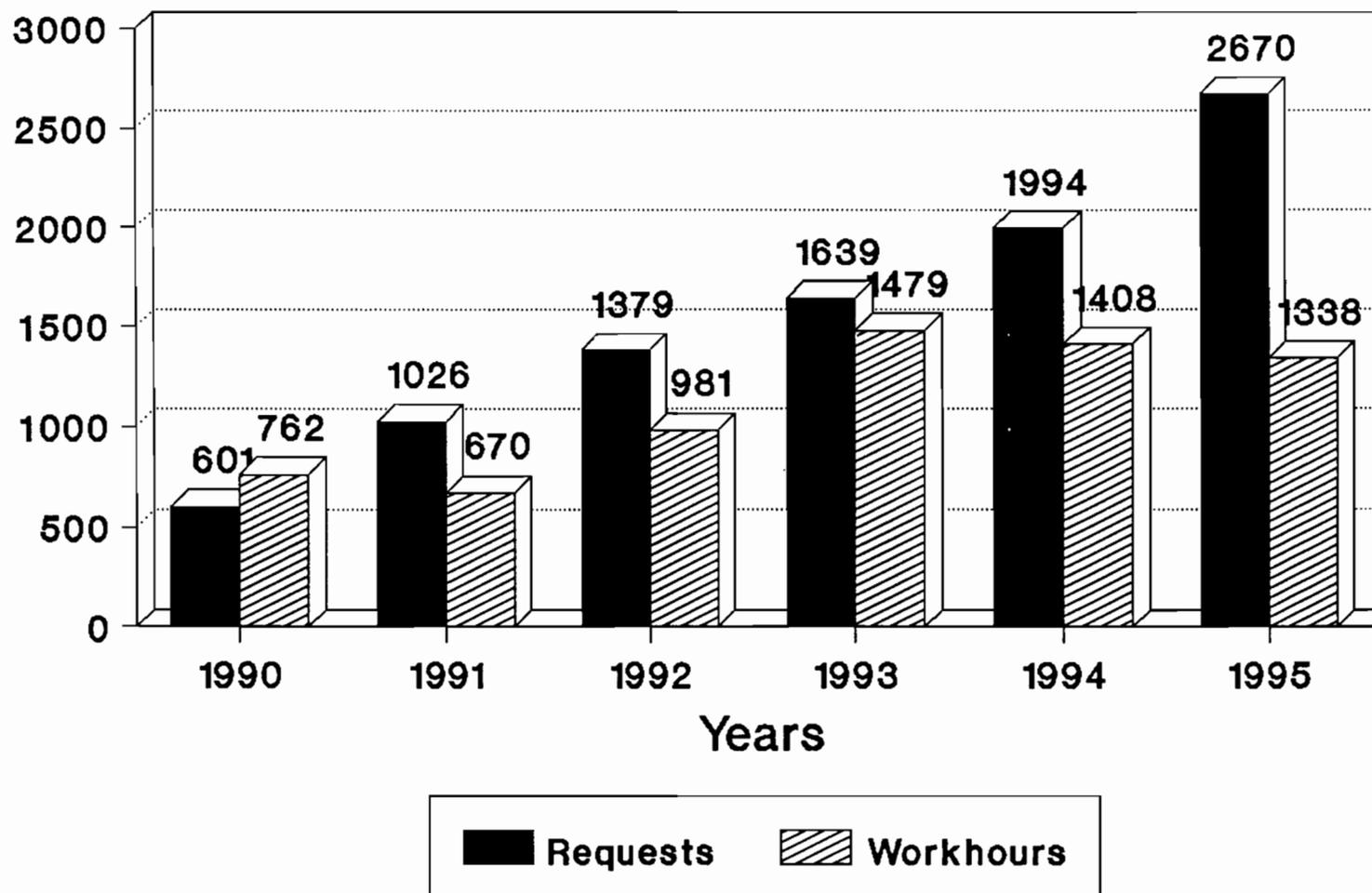


MAJOR NASA HISTORY PROGRAM ELEMENTS IN 1995

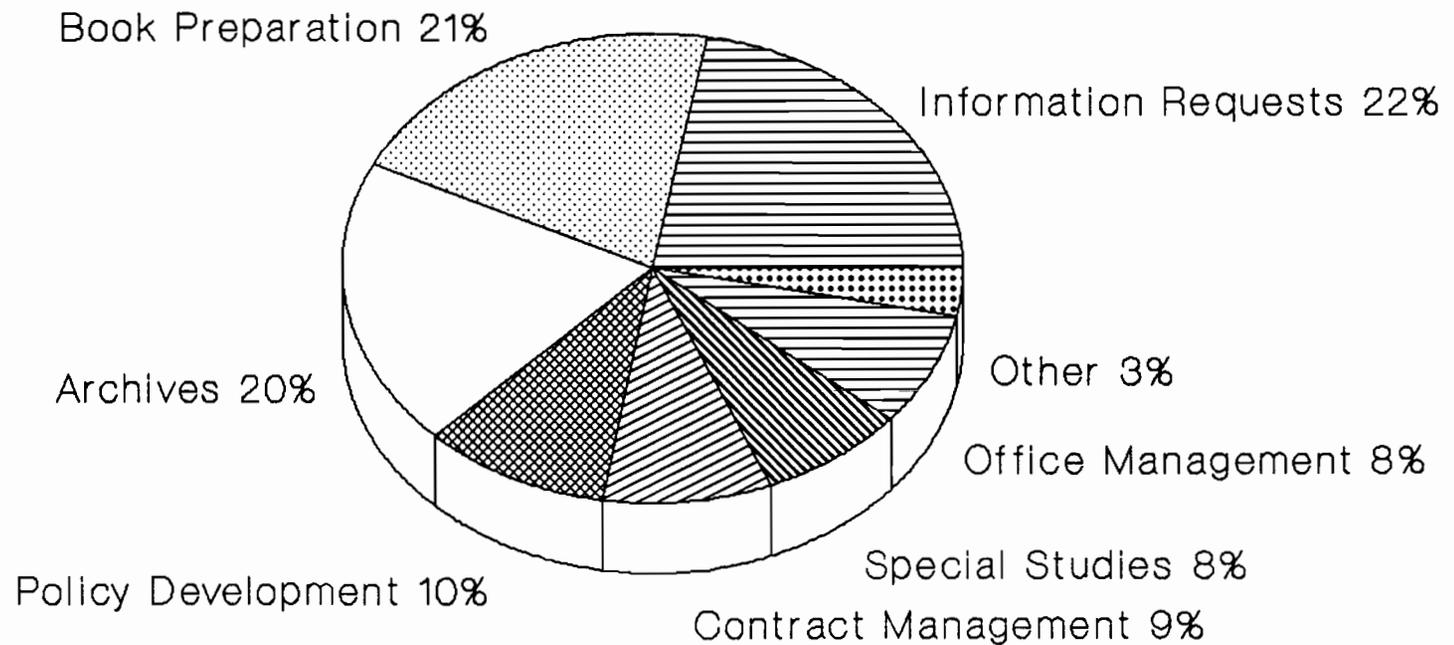


Percent of Total Time per Activity

NASA HISTORY OFFICE INFORMATION REQUESTS COMPARISON, 1990-1995



MAJOR NASA HISTORY PROGRAM ELEMENTS IN 1995



Percent of Total Time per Activity

REQUESTS IN 1995

