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COMMISSION ON PHYSICAL SCIENCES, MATHEMATICS, AND APPLICATIONS

Board on Physics and Astronomy

Plasma Science Committee

FINAL TECHNICAL PROGRESS REPORT

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Plasma Science Committee (PLSC)
and the Panel on Opportunities in Plasma Science and Technology (OPST)

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This progress report covers activities of the Plasma Science Committee for the period June 1, 1993 to May 31, 1994.

SUMMARY

The Plasma Science Committee (PLSC) of the National Research Council (NRC) is charged with monitoring the health of the field of plasma science in the United States. Accordingly, the Committee identifies and examines both broad and specific issues affecting the field. Regular meetings, teleconferences, briefings from agencies and the scientific community, the formation of study panels to prepare reports, and special symposia are among the mechanisms used by the PLSC to meet its charge. This progress report presents a review of PLSC activities from June 1, 1993 to May 31, 1994. The details of prior activities are discussed in earlier reports. This report also includes the status of activities associated with the PLSC study on opportunities in plasma science and technology.

During the above period, the PLSC continued to track and participate in, when requested, discussions on the health of the field. Much of the perspective of the PLSC has been presented in its report *Research Briefing on Contemporary Problems in Plasma Science*. That report not only has served as the basis for briefings to representatives of the federal government and the community-at-large, but also served as the starting point for the Panel on Opportunities in Plasma Science and Technology (OPST) as it began an assessment of the field.

The PLSC also continued its follow-up briefings and discussions on the results of the report *Plasma Processing of Materials: Scientific and Technological Opportunities* (PPPM). As a result of these activities, the Committee is now working with the NRC Committee on Atomic, Molecular, and Optical Sciences (CAMOS) to organize a symposium on database needs in plasma processing of materials.

THE COMMITTEE

The Plasma Science Committee is a standing committee under the auspices of the Board on Physics and Astronomy (BPA), Commission on Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Applications (CPSMA) of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS)—National Research Council. The PLSC is a multidisciplinary committee with membership drawn from universities, industry, government, and national laboratories. Areas of expertise on the committee include accelerators, beams, and radiation sources; nonneutral plasmas; space plasma physics; astrophysics; computational physics and applied mathematics; fusion plasmas; fundamental experiments and theory; and, low-temperature plasmas, including plasma-surface interactions. It is broadly representative of the community, providing perspective on various issues that affect the progress and vitality of plasma science. A special effort has been made to ensure that the committee takes into account the roles of both the science and engineering communities in the field. [A roster is attached.]

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Ronald Taylor

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The Committee identifies and makes recommendations on the needs of the plasma science community, particularly in connection with research opportunities and support, and provides guidance to federal agencies regarding their plasma science research programs. The operating guidelines of the PLSC, organized in 1988 to monitor the continuing development and assess the general health of the field, include the following: (1) to provide a continuing forum for the discussion of problems in the field of plasma science, while simultaneously developing, initiating, and overseeing the conduct of special studies focused on high-priority topics; (2) to maintain a broad and unified definition of plasma science as a field; (3) to maintain a clear and comprehensive formulation of current plasma science policy issues and give guidance to decision makers in universities, non-profit research centers, and government agencies; (4) to promote coordination among institutions involved in plasma science and make recommendations aimed at education of sufficient personnel in the field; (5) to monitor the industrial technological base; and (6) to sponsor workshops and symposia as a means of communication among different branches of the field. Several mechanisms have been developed to achieve these objectives and to develop and undertake new projects. In particular, the PLSC organizes and conducts special technical studies, surveys, workshops, and other meetings. The PLSC also functions as an oversight committee for *ad hoc* panels charged with the task of preparing reports on specific issues or topics. Symposia held at the National Academy of Sciences or at research centers have been used to focus attention on particular issues connected with facilities, programs, or other matters of concern to the community.

The PLSC recognizes that issues that affect plasma science are periodically addressed by other advisory bodies, such as the Department of Energy (DOE) Fusion Energy Advisory Committee (FEAC) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Space Science and Applications Advisory Committee (SSAAC) and its subcommittees. However, the PLSC has a broader mandate and as a consequence provides a focus for the plasma science community as a whole that is unique and essential.

The PLSC is well prepared to respond to requests for studies on a broad array of topics and issues. Specific report-generating projects under the aegis of the PLSC are separately proposed and funded as the committee identifies key issues itself or accepts requests from agencies of the government and develops corresponding activities.

HIGHLIGHTS OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Regular meetings of the Committee and special meetings with federal agency representatives and the scientific community are essential to maintaining continuous contact with both groups. Committee members are often requested to make presentations to agency representatives, the scientific community, or other groups on matters of importance to the plasma science community-at-large. The highlights of regular meetings during the performance period of this contract are presented below.

Regular PLSC Meetings

November 1-5, 1993 (St. Louis, MO). The committee discussed the results of the PPPM report, including a recommended connection to the Federal AMPP. The Committee also met with the Co-Chairs of the assessment panel, reviewed the background to the study, including the PLSC perspectives presented in the summary document, and discussed ways that the PLSC might assist the study panel. Finally, the PLSC discussed near-term and long-range plans—a workshop on nonneutral plasmas and another on laboratory experiments related to space plasmas.

STATUS OF PLSC PROJECTS

Summary

Over the past several years, the PLSC initiated or completed several projects. Under the auspices of the PLSC, the Panel on Plasma Processing of Materials completed a study on low temperature plasma science and its

relationship to the industrial base of plasma science. Also under PLSC auspices, the Panel on Opportunities in Plasma Science and Technology began an assessment of the field that will both assess the state of knowledge in basic plasma science and also lay out the priorities of the community in pursuing its research agenda over the next several years. In addition, the Committee has undertaken several other projects, including the following:

- Follow-up to the Study on Plasma Processing
- Workshop on Database Needs for Plasma Processing of Materials (in cooperation with the CAMOS)
- Study on Opportunities in Plasma Science and Technology

The current status of these projects bears directly on the activities of the PLSC during the performance of this contract.

Plasma Processing of Materials

As one of its first projects, the PLSC initiated a study on plasma processing of materials. In 1991, the Panel on Plasma Processing of Materials, chaired by Joseph Proud (GTE Laboratories, Inc.), completed a study which focused on several aspects of plasma processing of materials—its relationship to low-energy plasma science, its application to the electronics industry, the scientific foundations, and educational issues. The study not only pointed out the contribution that plasma processing science makes to the national well being, but also identified the technological significance of this area and its role in international competitiveness. More specifically, the study did the following: (1) evaluated the advances in low-temperature plasma science on surface processing technology with an emphasis on microelectronic applications; (2) identified key research problems in plasma physics and chemistry and the interaction of plasmas and surfaces; and (3) identified ways to bring to bear the strength of the plasma science community on the scientific, technological, and educational needs of the plasma processing community.

Additional follow-up activity has been and continues to be promoted and conducted by the PLSC.

Workshop on Database Needs for Plasma Processing of Materials

The PLSC is co-sponsoring, jointly with the Committee on Atomic, Molecular, and Optical Sciences of the NRC, a workshop on database needs for plasma processing of materials. The need for improved database was explicitly identified in the report *Plasma Processing of Materials: Scientific opportunities and Technological Challenge*. The workshop would bring a small group of experts together so that they may develop a specific, prioritized list of needs, appropriate action items, and an assessment of the potential impact on technology. Workshop participants would be expected to create a matrix that relates processes to the most important data base and diagnostic needs. Topics would include the following: electron and ion impact ionization, dissociation, and excitation cross sections; ion transport cross sections, particularly in the energy range from 1 eV to 100 eV; ion molecule reaction cross sections for ion energies in the same energy range; database generation and dissemination; theoretical capability; experimental capability; surface reaction probabilities and surface kinetics for free radicals, ions, and electrons; state-of-the-art plasma process simulation and plasma reactor design; and state-of-the-art plasma diagnostic capabilities. The workshop is being planned for April, 1995.

New Opportunities in Plasma Science and Technology

Plasma physics is not only a field which is rich in intellectual content, it is also the source of many new opportunities for scientific and technological advances. The development of its scientific forefronts and the exploitation of these new opportunities have implications for broader contemporary issues, such as education, industrial competitiveness, national defense, and interdisciplinary research. The PLSC is concerned that emphasis on application-oriented goals for most of the funding for plasma physics is neglecting the science foundation on which all such applications depend. This is undermining the development of the field, interfering with its role in science education, and ultimately weakening its ability to support plasma applications. Issues needing immediate attention include research in basic plasma physics, the impact of program priorities on education in plasma physics,

and the role of plasma physics in science education. A detailed perspective on these problems is presented in *Research Briefing on Contemporary Problems in Plasma Science*.

The PLSC devoted much of its effort in the past three years in planning for and organizing a broad assessment of the scientific and technological opportunities in plasma science. Through this process the PLSC developed the perspective presented in the research briefing discussed above. The OPST Panel, consisting of members with expertise and experience in a wide range of scientific activities, has been appointed to conduct the study. [A roster is attached.] The Panel consists of 13 members—7 chosen for their expertise and experience in a wide range of scientific activities and 6 chosen for their expertise in specific areas of plasma physics which span the bulk of the field. These areas are: (1) beams, accelerators, and coherent radiation sources; (2) nonneutral plasmas; (3) basic plasma science in magnetically-confined and inertial fusion plasmas; (4) space plasma physics; (5) astrophysics; (6) theory and computational plasma physics; (7) other fundamental plasma experiments; and, (8) low temperature plasmas. The assessment has been planned to reflect the views of the plasma community on the following topics: the health of plasma science in the United States; selected new opportunities for research and application to technological advances; the plasma science community's short-term and long-range goals; an evaluation of these goals in the context of national needs and the broader issues referred to above; and recommendations to federal agencies on optimum strategies for achieving these goals. The findings of the panel will be prepared as an NRC report and distributed to the appropriate federal agencies, Congressional committees, educational institutions, and research facilities.

The Panel is scheduled to meet next in late spring/early summer 1993. Following that meeting, the final draft of the report will be assembled and submitted to the NRC for review. After approval, the Panel Co-Chairs will begin a series of briefings of the sponsoring agencies, members of the community at professional society meetings, and Washington policymakers.

Funding for this project has been obtained from DOE, NSF, and ONR. As the oversight committee for the panel, the PLSC continues to assist the panel, as necessary, in addressing the charge and will assist the panel in its dissemination and followup activities.

Attachments

- (1) Roster of the Plasma Science Committee
- (2) Roster of the Panel on Opportunities in Plasma Science and Technology

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

COMMISSION ON PHYSICAL SCIENCES, MATHEMATICS, AND APPLICATIONS

2101 Constitution Avenue Washington, D.C. 20418

BOARD ON
PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY

(202) 334-3520
FAX: (202) 334-2791
INTERNET: BPA@NAS.EDU

PLASMA SCIENCE COMMITTEE

Terms expire on June 30 of year indicated.

Ravi Sudan (Chair) 1995
Lab Plasma Studies
Cornell University
369 Upson Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853
607-255-4127
FAX: 607-255-3004
EMAIL: sudan@lps.cornell.edu

Richard A. Gottscho (Vice Chair) 1995
AT&T Bell Laboratories
6D-329
600 Mountain Avenue
Murray Hill, NJ 07974
908-582-7921
FAX: 908-582-2913
EMAIL: rag@allwise.att.com

Maha Ashour-Abdalla 1994
University of California
Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics
Los Angeles, CA 90024-1567
310-825-8881
FAX: 310-206-3051

E. M. Campbell 1994
Laser Program Office
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
P.O. Box 5508
Livermore, CA 94550
510-422-5391
FAX: 510-423-6506

James Dakin 1995
GE Lighting
Nela Park
Cleveland, OH 44112
216-266-3037
FAX: 216-266-2963
EMAIL: dakin@liso.dnet.ge.com

Ronald C. Davidson 1994
Plasma Physics Laboratory
Princeton University
P.O. Box 451
Princeton, NJ 08544
609-243-3553
FAX: 609-243-2749

Alan Garscadden 1994
Research Physicist
Aeropropulsion and Power Lab
Wright Research and Development Center
WRDC/POOC-3
Wright Patterson AFB, OH 45433-6563
513-255-2923, 3835
FAX: 513-476-4095
EMAIL: garscada@pohost.appl.wpafb.af.mil

NAS Roy Gould 1994
NAE California Institute of Technology
Mail Station 128-95
Pasadena, CA 91125
818-356-4811
FAX: 818-793-8675

Chuan S. Liu 1995
Department of Physics & Astronomy
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20712-4111
301-405-8054
FAX: 301-405-9966

Francis Perkins 1994
ITER
San Diego Design Center
11025 N. Terry Pines Road
La Jolla, CA 92037
619-622-5100

Norman Rostoker 1994
Department of Physics
University of California
Irvine, CA 92717
714-856-6949
FAX: 714-856-5903

PLASMA SCIENCE COMMITTEE

Terms expire on June 30 of year indicated.

Ellen Zweibel (pending) 1996
Department of Astrophysical, Planetary, and
Atmospheric Sciences
University of Colorado
Campus Box 391
Boulder, CO 80309
303-492-8439
FAX: 303-492-0642
EMAIL: solarz::zweibel

NRC Staff

Donald C. Shapero, Director
EMAIL: dshapero@nas

Ronald D. Taylor, Senior Program Officer
EMAIL: rtaylor1@nas

Board on Physics and Astronomy
National Research Council
2101 Constitution Avenue
Washington, DC 20418
202-334-3520
FAX: 202-334-2791
EMAIL: bpa@nas.edu

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NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

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2101 Constitution Avenue Washington, D.C. 20418

BOARD ON
PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY

(202) 334-3520
FAX: (202) 334-2791
INTERNET: BPA@NAS.EDU

PANEL ON OPPORTUNITIES IN PLASMA SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Terms expire June 30, 1995

John Ahearn (Co-Chair)
Sigma Xi
P.O. Box 13975
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
919-549-4691
Fax: 919-549-0090
Email: ahearn@sigmaxi.org

Clifford Surko (Co-Chair)
Physics Department 0319
University of California, San Diego
La Jolla, CA 92093
619-534-6880
Fax: 619-534-0173
Email: csurko@ucsd.edu

NAE Peter Banks
Office of the Dean
College of Engineering
University of Michigan
2104 EECS
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
313-764-8475
Fax: 313-763-9487

Thomas Birmingham
Code 695
Goddard Space Flight Center
Greenbelt, MD 20771
301-286-7110
Fax: 301-286-1683
Email: (Internet) USTJB@lepvax.gsfc.nasa.gov

Michael Boyle
1433 Livorna Rd.
Alamo, CA 94507
510-937-7030

Ronald C. Davidson
Princeton University
Plasma Physics Laboratory
Princeton, NJ 08543
609-243-3553
Fax: 609-243-2749

Jonah Jacob
Science Research Laboratory, Inc.
15 Ward Street
Somerville, MA 02143
617-547-1122
Fax: 617-547-4104

Miklos Porkolab
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Department of Physics and Plasma Fusion Center
NW16-106
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-253-8448
Fax: 617-253-0238
Email: porkolab@pfc.mit.edu

NAS Edwin Salpeter
308 Newman Laboratory
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853
607-255-4937 (-6918 secretary)
Fax: 607-255-5907

Roberta Saxon
Molecular Physics Laboratory
SRI International
333 Ravenswood Avenue
Menlo Park, CA 94025
415-859-2663
Fax: 415-859-6196
Email: saxon@mplvax.sri.com

NAS Sam Treiman
Department of Physics
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08540
609-258-4350
Fax: 609-258-1549
Email: treiman@pupgg.princeton.edu

Herbert York
6110 Camino de la Costa
La Jolla, CA 92037
619-459-1776
Fax: 619-534-7655

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Terms expire June 30, 1995

Ellen Zweibel
Department of Astrophysical, Planetary
and Atmospheric Sciences
University of Colorado
Campus Box 391
Boulder, CO 80309
303-492-8439
Fax: 303-492-0642
Email: solarz::zweibel

BPA Liaison

Joseph M. Proud
15 Brewster Road
Sudbury, MA 01776
617-443-4923
Fax: 617-443-4923

NRC Staff

Donald C. Shapero, BPA Director
Email: dshapero@nas.edu

Daniel F. Morgan, Program Officer
Email: dmorgan@nas.edu

Board on Physics and Astronomy
National Research Council
2101 Constitution Avenue
Washington, DC 20418
202-334-3520
Fax: 202-334-2791
Email: bpa@nas.edu