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A TRAVELING HUB OF INFORMATION: AN ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY OF THE LIBRARY AT
NASA JET PROPULSION LABORATORY

Abstract

The Library at NASA's Jet Propulsion Library has undergone many changes to staffing, functions, services, and physical space in its seven decades of continuous operation, but none more curious and interesting than its assignments to various reporting organizations over time. This paper offers a chronological examination of the history, changes, and (possible) reasoning behind its organizational journey, and how it compares with other NASA center libraries as well as space industry and federal research libraries outside NASA. According to a JPL internal reorganization history and other documents, the Library has occupied organizational space under Lab Administration, Personnel, Human Resources, Documentation and Material, Logistics, and currently Engineering and Science. The JPL Library is not unique in this situation; To be sure, specialized libraries are continually moving around organization charts, shuttling between more specific and more general lines of reporting, and ever asking "Does the library serve the entire institution, or a limited population of users?" The authors will offer a discussion of the benefits and challenges of each reorganization, as well as how each organizational home reflected and influenced the Library's role at the Lab.