

program's history, as complaints about a "job shop" role were expressed in the program. In retrospect, though, key program managers saw that it was the ability to find missions and obtain mission commitments that kept the program alive and enabled technical developments to proceed, for development wedded to missions greatly facilitated dealing with the larger environment and the capricious forces operating there. Program needs and responsible budgetary expenditures were demonstrated in line with developments to meet mission schedules, while pressures for justifying missions and for meeting the schedules of costly missions, fell on those outside the program. RTG program people often commented that a slipped mission schedule was a help because "we would never have made that earlier launch date." Thus, the program sometimes benefited from slipped schedules in that this did not reflect badly on the program itself but instead left intact its record of always "being ready at the launch pads." Of course, mission slippage, curtailment, or—worst of all—cancellation, can be very negative aspects of mission dependence if the program itself has to cut back or "stand down" from an effort, and thereby lose momentum and continuity.

*Importance of Flexibility—and Continuity.* Flexibility is extremely important in accomplishing modern large-scale endeavors and helps in dealing with the larger environment. But positive flexibility requires competence with, and confidence in, a technology. The program's people must know what they have to offer and be ready to interpret that product to others while accommodating to changing priorities, perceptions, and concerns. In the story of the RTG program, the many changes in larger organizations were not vital largely because they remained extraneous for a long-term, dedicated, experienced program core caught up in missions and determined to prove and improve their technology. Today's RTG program manager, Bernard Rock, can look back on more than 20 years of his own participation in the program. Still close at hand are key personnel, George Ogburn, one of the "originals" from the late 1950s, who now functions as safety nuclear officer on Galileo and Solar-Polar, and Ted Dobry, now in a higher level safety role at DOE. One of Rock's two key directors today is James Lombardo, who joined the program in 1971, and was manager on missions such as LES 8/9 and VOYAGER, and now is director of Nuclear Systems Development. The other is Gary Bennett, who earlier was nuclear power flight safety manager on LES 8/9 and Voyager, and later took