

Los Alamos Rolodex: Doing Business with the National Lab 1967-1978

Center for Land Use Interpretation



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In 2012 the Center for Land Use Interpretation acquired a set of seven rolodexes from the dispersed collection of former Los Alamos National Laboratory employee Ed Grothus, who operated a salvage company of lab cast-offs, known as The Black Hole.

Now part of the Center's Radioactive Archive, the rolodexes contain thousands of business cards kept by some unknown office in the lab over the 1960s and 1970s—the peak of the arms race and its technological development. They are a physical record of everything from major military contractors to obscure high- and low-tech software widget suppliers—many of which are no longer extant, or have evolved.

The selection of 150 cards may be viewed as a snapshot of synergies between the business community and America's atomic might. On the one hand, they are a direct indexical connection from the recent past to the sources of creating the most sophisticated and powerful national defense technologies in the world. On the other hand, they are obsolete information, relics of a former usefulness. As a specific printed historical record—superbly reproduced in full color—they are relevant to a potential understanding of the present; they are evocative evidence of the links that formed the secret technology of our nation.

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