Newsletter Focus

MEDIATECA INFN: THE HISTORY OF PHYSICS THROUGH VIDEOS

Valuing and sharing the audio-visual heritage of the history of Italian physics: these are the two main goals of the Mediateca INFN: (https://lamediateca.infn.it/mediateca/) the history of physics through videos (https://lamediateca.infn.it/mediateca/), the new cultural project of INFN, dedicated to the general public, but in particular aimed at students of Italian schools and university researchers. It is, in fact, a digital archive open to everyone and easy to consult, to do research, gather information, explore, and re-trace the history, events, and anecdotes of physics through the story of its protagonists. Today, it includes almost 200 films totalling more than 70 hours of interviews, documentaries, TV news, conferences, seminars. It is a unique and extraordinary heritage, which has, in large part, been digitalised to preserve it beyond the deterioration of the analogue supports and which comes from the archives of INFN but also from the archives of other important science institutions, such as CERN in Geneva and Fermilab in Chicago. In particular, the project was created by INFN in collaboration with the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, which provided the media library with the video lessons created by great scientists who have made the history of Italian physics, like Edoardo Amaldi, Gilberto Bernardini, Marcello Conversi, Giorgio Salvini, Bruno Touschek, and others too. In addition, some historical videos come from the Rai Teche archives.

The project was presented during the event “La fisica in Super8” (“Physics on Super8”), with the Nobel Prize winner Giorgio Parisi and the president of INFN Antonio Zoccoli, which was held on 2 November in the auditorium of the Liceo Virgilio in Rome. The school is associated with the birth of particle physics due to the discovery of the muon by the physicists Marcello Conversi, Ettore Pancini, and Oreste Piccioni who sought refuge in the school’s classrooms in 1943 under World War 2 to continue their research. The event involved the participation of more than 600 classes, with 11 thousand students of high schools that connected from all over Italy, together with the Roman high school colleagues present in the classroom.

The school world is, thus, among the main recipients of this project: from the birth of the first particle accelerators to the discovery of the Higgs boson, from the Nobel prize for physics for Carlo Rubbia in 1984, to the 2021 Nobel prize for Giorgio Parisi. The INFN media library was, in fact, also devised as a chance to become familiar with the world of scientific research, as a tool for deepening studies, and an opportunity to discover little known aspects and curious facts, but also to understand the significant role that many Italian scientists have had in the history of modern physics.
The project was created in the context of the seventy-year celebrations for INFN (1951-2021) to showcase the history of one of the most important Italian research institutes and, as such, an integral part of the history and culture of everyone.

Connecting to the portal: lamediateca.infn.it (https://lamediateca.infn.it/mediateca/) it will, thus, be possible to do advanced searches, through categories, key words, and tags, easily searching points of interest thanks to the practical indexing of the longest films. Thus, you can discover and find out more about intriguing events and surprising figures who made their mark on Italian physics: from the theoretical research and experiments launched in the 1930s by Enrico Fermi and his school, to the construction in 1960 of the first collision ring in the world, from the foundation of CERN to the discovery of the W and Z bosons that won the Nobel prize for Carlo Rubbia.

You can also submit a request to receive INFN archive videos in high resolution, but also to contribute to the archive itself if you have audio visual material of historical value. The Mediateca INFN is a work in progress, which will continue to be enriched and to grow over time.