Dr. Alex Wellerstein
Associate Historian, American Institute of Physics College Park MD

“John Wheeler’s H-bomb Blues: Searching for a Missing Document in the High Cold War”

There's never a right time to lose a secret document under unusual circumstances. But for the physicist John A. Wheeler (popularly known as the coiner of the term "black hole," among his numerous other achievements), there might not have been a worse time than January of 1953. While on an overnight train ride to Washington, D.C., only a month after the test of the first hydrogen bomb prototype, Wheeler lost, under unusual circumstances, a document explaining - in straightforward terms how the United States invented thermonuclear weapons. Tracing out the story of how Wheeler ended up on that train, with that particular document, and the consequences of its loss (or was it theft?) provides a window into the precarious intersection of government secrecy, H-bomb histories, and inter-agency atomic rivalry in the high Cold War.

Alex Wellerstein is an Associate Historian at the American Institute of Physics in College Park, MD. He received a Ph.D. in the History of Science from Harvard University in 2010. He is currently in the process of finishing a book on the history of nuclear secrecy in the United States, to be published by the University of Chicago Press.

**Wednesday January 30, 2013**
4:00pm
106 Hannan Hall
Refreshments will be served at 3:45

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For more information, please contact:

Dr. Daniel Sober (202) 319-5856

If you would like to request disability accommodations, please contact Gail Hershey at (202)-319-5315 to make arrangements.