Abstract
The cost of keeping records has been greatly reduced in the modern world by the development of
digital technology but the resulting records are now disappearing about as fast as they are being
created. This problem is illustrated by difficulties encountered in preserving digital records of the
Stanford Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (SAIL). All such records from the 1960s have been
lost due to technical difficulties and, while most records from the 1970s and ‘80s have been
preserved and are now accessible on a web site, they will disappear within the next 30 years
unless a more reliable way can be found to preserve those records and keep them accessible. This
is a worldwide problem and needs a worldwide solution. It appears that a solution can be found
by augmenting the services of an existing international organization so as to provide redundant
storage, maintenance and translation services that will keep records accessible for thousands of
years.

About the Speaker:
Les Earnest got an FBI record at age 12 as a result of dabbling in cryptography. He somehow got
a BSEE from Caltech in 1953 then spent a dozen years in the increasingly corrupt military-
industrial complex. After a year at CIA Headquarters and two years in the Pentagon doing
systems engineering for the Joint Chiefs of Staff he escaped to Stanford, moving from military
intelligence to artificial intelligence. By 1975 he had created the following firsts: spelling
checker, search engine, and social networking system with a blogging service and was a member
of the small committee that started the internet. Les left SAIL in 1980 to create a start-up called
Imagen, then returned to Stanford for a few years as associate chair of the Computer Science
Department. Concurrently he has officiated at thousands of bicycle races, including Olympics,
and continues as executive director of the Federation of Independent Associations for Cycling.
(FIAC).