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VOYAGER I - IN THE ZONE: WHO SAYS INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL IS IMPOSSIBLE?

Abstract

In August, 2012 NASA announced that Voyager I had traveled outside our solar system, which NASA confirmed in subsequent months. Voyager I is thus the first man-made object which has traveled beyond the heliosphere, making it the first probe to go interstellar. If consistent milestones like this continue, our ability for human deep spaceflight is inevitably possible. From the first dugouts to the modern super-tanker, humanity's goal has always been to go farther, faster. The retirement of the NASA Space Shuttle is but an opportunity for mankind's next step toward an interstellar spacecraft. Increasingly, researchers are providing credible suggestions which focus on a proposal for on interstellar travel. Naysayers often seem to forget the many decades of successful research and development, along with countless firsts and feats of accomplished through manned spaceflight. It is on the shoulders of those early pioneers upon which we stand. These lessons have led us to a burgeoning capability to produce advanced space transportation systems. Interstellar travel may become as real as iPads at our finger-tips and smart phones which can video chat anywhere in the world — something once only envisioned in science fiction. Results from the Swift, Chandra, WMAP, Hubble, Kepler and the VLA Space Telescopes, as well as many other scientific and technological discoveries, are making it possible to move forward to explore our universe in new ways. Space transportation and interplanetary telecommunications are key ingredients to advance humankind into a spacefaring generation.

Why is this important?

The development of outer space holds a potential role for each and every person to live out their lives at maximum potential. If a star, hundreds of light years away were to go supernova, sending us a gamma-ray burst, we will not have time to escape before all life in the solar system is entirely eliminated. Discourse and ideological regimes are forming, centered around the notion of interstellar travel. So, who

says interstellar travel is impossible? Some of the best and brightest minds are working on the developing interstellar capabilities. This paper will identify and discuss existing strategies, from a wide range of thinkers and options with the goal of longterm, interstellar missions. It will also present technological, political, ideological, social, institutional and cultural key steps towards enabling advanced stages of readiness for deep space missions.