

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)  
Calling Planet Earth - Space Outreach to the General Public (6)

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## ESTABLISHING THE PLANETARY SOCIETY IN LONDON

**Abstract**

In 2016 The Planetary Society established an outreach chapter in London and collaborated with numerous astronomy advocates to strengthen the Planetary Society's presence in the UK. The Planetary Society's mission is to empower the world's citizens to advance space science and exploration. Through the work of our Global Volunteer Network, we're able to bring this mission to life around the world. Our volunteers are space enthusiasts who take an active role with The Planetary Society by engaging with people in their communities.

As outreach coordinator, I created a platform for local and international astronomical organizations to share their news and upcoming activities with our rapidly expanding London membership. The key lessons learnt from establishing a new outreach program were threefold. *Firstly*, collaboration and engagement with the wider and existing space community is crucial. It is most effective to work together towards the united goal of increasing public engagement. *Secondly*, it is important to cater to the interests of the community. For the Planetary Society in London our goal was to create a centralized resource that brought together space enthusiasts from across the community and provide information on the broad range of space-related events taking place in the city. *Thirdly*, it is key to be proactive. Public engagement must be engaging and active to be sustainable.

Starting from nothing The Planetary Society established an online presence in London that catered to the interests of the local space community. Our newsletter summarizes the latest astronomy news and provides a one-stop-shop for all space-related events going on in and around London. The newsletter's readership continues to grow thanks to our team's social media efforts and now has over 350 subscribers. The society is active through numerous social media channels including Facebook, twitter and Instagram which allows us to advance the reach of our public engagement efforts.

It was our priority to work with the existing space community and collaborate on public engagement. In 2017 The Planetary Society brought together space enthusiasts at Queen Mary University of London for "*SpaceUp London 2017*" — the first large-scale event organized by Planetary Society volunteers in Europe. The day involved quick-fire 5-minute talks, breakout discussion sessions, keynote talks, brainstorming sessions, and other opportunities for guests to challenge each other. The event embodied The Planetary Society's mission to '*empower the world's citizens to advance space science and exploration*'.