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”FROM THE OUTBACK TO OUTER SPACE”: A CASE STUDY OF A SPACE EXHIBITION AS AN  
IAC OUTREACH PROJECT

**Abstract**

Host cities for the International Astronautical Congress are required to develop an education and outreach program to accompany the congress and thus raise public awareness about space and encourage STEM education in the host city/country. For the 2017 International Astronautical Congress in Adelaide, South Australia, the Local Organising Committee (LOC) assigned the task of developing this program to the city’s two main cultural institutions, the State Library of South Australia and the South Australian Museum.

Although South Australia was the early hub of space activities in Australia, neither of these institutions had ever had a focus on collecting or exhibiting artefacts relating to space activities in the state, nor on providing educational and outreach programs on space-related subjects.

The State Library of South Australia stepped up to the challenge by partnering with the local office of the National Archives of Australia to develop a major exhibition, “From the Outback to Outer Space” focusing on the history of Australia’s only launch facility, the Woomera Rocket Range, as the centrepiece of its education and outreach program. This exhibition brought to light rarely-seen artefacts, photographs and audio-visual materials from state and national collections, and ultimately resulted in the creation of new space heritage collections within the State Library and the development travelling versions of the display, which will reach additional audiences.

This paper presents a case study of the development of the exhibition and its associated public and education programs, for which the author was a consultant. In particular, it will examine the way in which the State Library, without in-house experience in the space field, harnessed the prestige of the IAC and the support of the Local Organising Committee to access resources and expertise that enabled the creation of a highly successful exhibition and outreach and education projects that reached a broad cross section of the local community. The author hopes that it will serve as an example for host city cultural institutions in developing space exhibitions as a component of the mandated IAC outreach and education program, even if they have had no previous expertise in this area.