

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)

Living In Space - Education And Outreach In Space Life Sciences and infrastructure development for capacity building (7.-A1.8)

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COMMUNICATING SPACE LIFE SCIENCES - SOME GENERIC REFLECTIONS ABOUT PUBLIC
RELATIONS AND MEDIA ACTIVITIES

Abstract

"Everyone knows what the Moon is; everyone knows what this decade is, and everyone can understand an astronaut who returned safely to tell the story. An objective so clearly and simply defined enables us to translate the vague notion of conquering outer space into a hard-hitting industrial program that can be orderly planned, scheduled, and priced out. It establishes a sorely needed, firm non vacillating goal, which alone can serve as a basis for a long-range plan".

The "father of the Moon rocket", Wernher von Braun, analyses in this quote the speech of US President John F. Kennedy in May 1961 by which he set the goal for the US to put a man on the moon and return him safely. Von Braun - an equally gifted engineer and communicator - points out what effective and efficient communications and public relations on space activities should be about: A clear and simple objective and goal, with clear and easy understandable messages and the best tool available, in order to reach the maximum amount of people possible. This challenge has not changed in the last 50 years. And, this challenge remains the same for Living in Space, Space Sciences and the ISS including the exploitation of ISS. Astrium as Europe's industrial No 1 and ESA prime contractor for the European part of the ISS is faced daily with this challenge.

The paper will elaborate in a systematic manner on communicating space activities: it starts by defining the notion of communication and public relations. The mission and relevance of communicating space activities will be discussed thoroughly before the focus will be put on the conception and planning of these activities. The importance of target groups is investigated and the process of identifying the core messages is presented, before looking at the available and best communication instruments. The paper looks at the implementation and lessons learnt. Also, the benefit of such activity for a major space company as Astrium is evaluated. A conclusion summarizes the findings in order to share the experience and inspire more space "activists" to promote Living in Space.