

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Lift-Off - Secondary Space Education (2)

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MEDIA SPACE - HOW SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AGED 12 TO 16 IN THE UK ARE CREATING EXCITING DIGITAL BOOKS AND MAGAZINES TO INFORM AND EXCITE NEW AUDIENCES ABOUT THE SUN, MARS EXPLORATION, CASSINI AND HUMAN SPACEFLIGHT.

Abstract

Engaging teenagers in STEM subjects, writing, and thinking about future careers is a challenge - especially in inner city schools. So how do you reach and inspire them? Media Space challenges young people themselves to think about the content, the stories, images and the people that will appeal to other teenagers. Students work on live space education briefs set by organisations such as the British Interplanetary Society, Royal Aeronautical Society, University of Cambridge, Queen Mary University of London and the UK Space Agency. They work alongside subject matter experts such as Professor Carl Murray, Dr Helen Mason, Dr Lucie Green, Dr Maggie Aderin Pocock and leading science writers and designers. They then produce magazines and books that explain science content but aimed at their fellow students. The benefits are that the students work on real briefs alongside space scientists, and the space scientists get a real insight into what appeals to young people and learn digital skills and communication skills from their young people. Student ambassadors are involved to help support the students and provide an insight into student life. The magazines that have resulted are attractive, appealing, and have been given awards for curriculum innovation by the London Education Partnership Awards and the National Careers Guidance Award for science outreach. They featured in the citation for the Sir Arthur Clarke 2012 Award for education outreach won by Venture Thinking.

The benefits of this approach include creating cost effective appealing space science content which is available on a variety of platforms. Students have an opportunity to find out about careers in space from space scientists and work and visit university settings. The model is easily replicable and is now being adapted for use in Manchester. The project has been written up as case study and the learning for the students externally evaluated by the University of Arts London.

Media Space offers an exciting way of engaging secondary students. The partnership approach and project based learning model brings together research, writing, digital publishing approaches and teamwork. The quality of work set by the young people is inspiring and the impact on the students has been impressive with many students from early projects choosing to continue to follow a career path to university and to remain interested in science communication projects as mentors. Magazines produced include Ticket to Mars, Lift Off, A Big Ball of Fire and will be available as exemplar.