

25th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE ACTIVITY AND SOCIETY (E5)
Space Societies, Professional Associations and Museums (6)

Author: Mr. Alistair Scott
The British Interplanetary Society, United Kingdom

SPACE FOR STEM EDUCATION AND OUTREACH - AN IMPORTANT ROLE FOR SMALL
SOCIETIES AND MUSEUMS

Abstract

Fifty years after the start of the Space age, Space is definitely part of everyday life, with an ever increasing number of Earth-orbiting satellites providing indispensable services, a space station permanently crewed and many more robotic missions exploring other distant planets and the universe beyond. But how do we maintain this momentum? It is now widely recognized that the developed world, particularly Europe and the USA, is not producing sufficient scientists and engineers to sustain the current rate of growth. There is now a critical need to improve education in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and the Small Societies and Museums are ideally placed to do just this.

But with Space in the news almost every day, it is now also time to shift the emphasis to "education through Space", that is, using the excitement of Space to raise aspirations, to inspire students to innovate, and to increase interest in STEM subjects.

Having reformed its Education and Outreach Committee in 2012, the British Interplanetary Society (BIS) has been active in both the education and outreach areas and has encouraged its new branches, both in the UK and in Europe to be pro-active too. The result has been amazing. BIS-Italia, its Italian branch, has straight away recruited a team of space professionals and enthusiasts to attend and run education and outreach events and to go into universities and schools. It now also supports ESA/ESRIN in many of its outreach activities. Meanwhile back in the UK, all three of the BIS' regional branches have been running highly successful 'Space Days' and lectures, while the Society itself has taken on the organising of the annual Sir Arthur Clarke Awards, recognising the outstanding contribution made by teams and individuals to all aspects of the Space business including Space education and outreach. It is now coordinating all the World Space Week activities in the UK and is currently preparing a proposal to the Department for Education for a Space Science and Technology Course for 16 to 18 year olds.

The Small Societies often have a different view of education and outreach, which may complement that of the larger, more established entities. They tend to have the local contacts and expertise to really make a difference.