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SPACE EXHIBITION AT A GRAND SCALE – A SPACE EDUCATION EXTRAVAGANZA: LESSONS FROM THE “SPACE MANIA” EXHIBITION

Abstract

Space exhibition at a grand scale – a space education extravaganza: lessons from the “space mania” exhibition.

”Space Mania” was a commercial space exhibition held on Israel on summer 2013. More than 100,000 visitors attend the event that was held on Tel-Aviv port, Israel’s largest recreation venue, on July and August 2013.

The exhibition was a commercial activity, but it was decided by the organizers and producers to be as accurate as possible, from scientific point of view. Two individuals were called to serve as both curators of the exhibition and as scientific advisers. The author (serving as the head of the space research center at the Fisher Institute for air and space strategic studies) and Dr. Igal Pat-El, the chairman of the Israel astronomical association. Packed with more than 60 years of experience in space science education, we took the job of creating coherence, educational and fun exhibition.

We started a journey to create the largest space themed exhibition in Israel’s history. The idea was simple, but hard to accomplish – to be interesting, attractive, innovative and accurate – under commercial restrictions of budget and previous obligations of the producers. The exhibition was constructed from a lot of exhibits, coming from a wide range of sources: from private collection of meteorites, to the US space and rocket center in Huntsville Alabama; from the aerospace companies in Israel to movie props from the US such as a full scale replica of the command module of “Apollo 13”. As curators, we were responsible for the collections of artifacts, ranging from a life size model of the MIR space station, to space food samples from NASA, and some artifacts from our very own private collection of space memorabilia.

We conceived a story, which took the visitors from the prehistoric times to the future of space exploration. Apart from the large collection of artifacts and models, there was an interactive zone, a program of lectures, plenty of screens with specially edited short documentaries, and much more.

In the paper we will describe the whole process of creating an ORIGINAL space exhibition, with all the various attractions that were envisioned. The lessons that will be presented could help anyone that think to embark on such an experience.