

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
 Space Culture – Public Engagement in Space through Culture (9)

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CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT – INSIGHTS FROM THE ROSETTA LEGACY CAMPAIGN

Abstract

On 30 September 2016, ESA’s Rosetta mission concluded its twelve-year journey of exploration across the Solar System with a controlled impact on Comet 67P/Churyumov–Gerasimenko. Rosetta has been a mission of many “firsts”: first spacecraft to rendezvous with a comet, accompany it for over two years, and land a human-made probe on its surface. The public outreach campaign run since 2013 by ESA and its partner agencies to raise awareness about Rosetta was also characterised by innovative elements: an open and transparent approach to communication, embracing risk as a key story-telling element, and making the mission ‘human’ and personally relevant to members of the general public.

During the last few weeks before the mission ended, ESA launched the Rosetta Legacy project, a web-based campaign to celebrate what this extraordinary mission has meant to the general public. Via a dedicated tumblr, ESA asked people across the world to share their personal experiences and feelings about how the mission had influenced them – whether they had followed it via the news or other social media, or perhaps found a special link between Rosetta’s adventures at the comet and their personal experience.

The campaign was promoted via ESA’s main website and social media channels – including the popular @ESA_Rosetta Twitter account; spot-prizes and one top prize were offered as incentives to participate. During a five-week period, 235 contributions (submitted by 213 individuals) including poetry, prose, photography, animation, and images of

Contributors spanning a broad age range, from small children to elderly citizens, joined the campaign from many corners of our planet, posting a variety of contributions. In this paper, we will present the diversity of contributions to the Rosetta Legacy campaign and the many different ways in which the mission and its narrative have connected with people from all paths of life: from artists that included Rosetta in their creative projects to students who were influenced to pick a specific subject or career; from women and men who (re)discovered their passion for space, science, and exploration to a variety of people who were inspired by the mission to take bold steps in their lives.

In December 2016, ESA published a collection of all contributions to the campaign as a freely available e-book, to keep a long-lasting record of the mission’s impact on a variety of public audiences.