

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Calling Planet Earth - Space Outreach to the General Public (6)

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UNITING WITH THE PEOPLE: SOYUZ AND ITS TOURING OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

Abstract

A principal aim of the Science Museum's exhibition about Russia's exploration of space (Cosmonauts: Birth of the Space Age, 2015) was to reach new audiences; to entice individuals and groups that would not normally include the Museum on their itineraries. The exhibition displayed a parade of historic and flown spacecraft – including Tereshkova's Vostok 6, but situated within a broad and deep cultural narrative that examined Imperial, Soviet and Federal Russia's relationship with the cosmos. The Museum's aspirations were realised with over 140,000 people visiting, many of the older demographic having not been minded to visit the Museum since their school days. Three months after its closure, the exhibition's curators now working with Russian colleagues, a redesigned version opened in Moscow. Soon after, its relationship with the Russian space sector ongoing, the Museum acquired the Soyuz TMA-19M spacecraft flown to and from the International Space Station by cosmonauts Yuri Malenkov, Tim Kopra and Britain's Tim Peake, figurehead of the European Space Agency's Principia mission. This was displayed in the Museum for eight months, along with a newly commissioned virtual reality experience, before embarking on a sponsored eighteen month tour of the United Kingdom. Science Museum Group (SMG) curators and explainers worked on an intensive programme of interpretations and events to accompany the tour, liaising and advising also with the sponsor on development of a school room bus, driving around the counties, carrying a set of screen-based challenges and information points. All of these Science Museum activities and aspirations chimed closely with the UK Space Agency's commitment to encourage opportunities for students across the UK to engage with science and technology by generating excitement around Peake and his Principia mission. This shared goal was cemented when the Agency and the National Space Centre contributed to the Museum's purchase of Peake's Sokol suit won during the mission and which joined the tour at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester. This paper summarises and assesses the SMG's recent programme of Russian space-related educational activities, and in particular those accompanying the Soyuz tour.