

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

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SPACE OUTREACH: WHY DO WE DO IT? DOES IT WORK? AND HOW DO WE DO IT BETTER?

Abstract

Millions of hours are spent planning and performing space outreach each year. From far-reaching strategic programs to individuals connecting informally with small groups, these efforts represent the literal public face of space. But how purposeful and effective are we, as the space outreach community?

For decades, outreach has been a topic of focus at the International Astronautical Congress. Using years of archives of International Astronautical Congress papers as a primary source, this research assesses the recent past and current state of our global space outreach efforts. How are people spending their precious time and other resources toward outreach? Are more projects designed strategically or purely passion-driven, and how does that affect the outcome? What is proven and documented to have deep impact? What are the trends of the recent years, and what looks to be sustained best practices?

With this collected information, a new approach is proposed to better inform people starting new strategic outreach projects of how to set goals and measurable objectives, assess their resource investment, define and target their audiences and design tactics — the outreach projects themselves — to succeed, all toward increasing the rigor of outreach.

Looking at our field not just as a grouping of related efforts, but as a discipline and community of practice allows us to be more than the sum of our parts. With this holistic view of our efforts, we can reach new heights in our engagement with the public.