

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

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CURATING FOR THE CURIOUS: SPACE MUSEUMS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Abstract

For all the popularity that Space Astronomy enjoy among the public as scientific fields, there are shortfalls in the public platforms where they are celebrated that must be addressed.

Studies suggests that a growing number of space science museums that once enjoyed a good deal of footfall and public engagement have become archaic, non-sustainable mausoleums to artefacts in an otherwise fast-paced industry. Historically, recreational organisations have been able to profit from this deficit, but are rarely able to offer anything back to the scientific or creative communities that support its existence.

In my paper I argue that a more practical, sustainable and enabling model for Space museum curation is needed; one which allows for input from across the spectrum of scientific and creative communities. I explore the history of Science and Space museum curation over the last 150 years and use the data to construct an ideological and economic framework for designing, implementing, maintaining Space museums in the 21st Century.

I explore the different possible future manifestations, but in all cases maintain that the lowest common denominator in such a facility is the physical space of the museum itself, and that the main variable remains the collaborative effort of local artists, scientists and educators.

I argue that by employing intersectional and trans-disciplinary design in their curation process, space museums benefit from a range of innovative and cost-effective advantages that outshine conventional models of public outreach and curation.

I also discuss the various advantages of appealing to older generations by encouraging more imaginative content (i.e. exhibits) that appeal to emotion whilst still acting as an informational instrument, with the end-goal of sparking meaningful dialogue about humanity's "place in Space".

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the space museum can once again become a physical platform for scientific aswell as humanistic discussion, that puts space researchers at the front-seat of science communication, cultural engagement, and public outreach.