30th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE AND SOCIETY (E5)
Interactive Presentations - 30th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE AND SOCIETY (IP)

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PRESERVING AND SHARING AEROSPACE HISTORY THROUGH CROSS GENERATIONAL AND INTERACTIVE COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

Abstract

The challenges of broad reach and individual retention of any topic affect most organizations and projects. Competing for funding, volunteers, mind share, and conflicting objectives also effect projects. Our organization has those same challenges, but we have come up with unique activities that help us to create easier access across demographics and international reach while we also consider retention, funding, and of course the all-important FUN! And on a tiny budget. Our specific topic is preserving the history of the Viking mission while inspiring future leaders and thinkers, but our practices can be applied to many missions or aerospace topics. When I first addressed this challenge, barriers and conflicts were tossed into my way by well-meaning critics. It would be easy to become discouraged based on the credible feedback I received, but when I think about Viking, I remember the mission as an 11 year old child - imagining going to Mars, what might be there, how we might get there, the fascinating people I was exposed to as a child of a Viking mission team member, and ultimately how exciting it was. It is that sense and perspective that drove me to develop multigenerational, crowd sourced, interactive activities and events fueled by technologies I used in my previous careers. These are the practices and applications I will share in this interactive presentation, and in particular focusing on our trademark series, the MarsMaker events where we build spacecraft!. These events were designed to inspire curiosity about the mission and its myriad of investigations, in a format where actual experimentation and learning could take place. The lessons learned during these events include the basics of the Viking mission itself, the science and engineering, but they further extend to include organizational and leadership lessons, intrinsic in hands on group based collaborative experience. This novel approach has resulted in not only participant enthusiasm and education, but also opportunities for leadership development of young professionals and students, application of basic engineering principals, and the convergence of creative and analytical skills to solve problems in a real time setting. And of course they're fun! Our MarsMaker events or suitable for ages 3 years to 100, and are best as cross generational experience, creating opportunities for mentorship and collaboration that unfold organically. The activity has a formal plan that we provide to our collaborating partners and results in a final artistic representation of a Viking craft.