



News Release

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September 30, 2003

EXPERT TEAM TO HELP DESIGN COSMIC ORIGINS EXHIBIT

Leading research scientists and museum experts from around the country will gather at the Space Science Institute in Boulder November 7-8 to help develop a new, cutting-edge science exhibit that will travel across the nation for six years and reach millions of people.

The exhibit project, dubbed "Cosmic Origins," addresses some of humankind's most ancient concerns, such as, 'Where did we come from?' and 'Are we alone?' These age-old questions form the basis of NASA's Origins Program, a series of missions spanning the next twenty years that will use a host of space- and ground-based observatories to understand the origin and development of galaxies, stars, planets, and the conditions necessary to support life.

The National Science Foundation and NASA are providing the Space Science Institute with grants to develop the 3,000-square-foot exhibition, which will be updated continuously throughout its lifetime.

The Space Science Institute specializes in bringing scientists and educators together to create innovative education and public outreach programs. "We look for the hottest topics in the space and Earth sciences," said Paul Dusenbery, the Institute's Executive Director, "and then we work to translate that cutting edge science for the public."

Unlike museums, which often maintain fabrication shops and staffs of exhibit designers, the Space Science Institute brings together a team of museum experts and scientists from many organizations for each exhibit. Once the design is complete, bids are solicited from fabrication companies. "What's unique about our approach," said Dusenbery, "is that we can often respond more quickly than most museums to bring new science discoveries to the public. For each exhibit project, we put together a rapid response team of the best people in the field."

The Cosmic Origins exhibition will bring discoveries from the NASA program to museums across the United States as part of a six-year national tour scheduled to begin in 2005. To make the science exciting and accessible to the whole family, the exhibit will feature many hands-on components that will engage children and adults. The exhibit program will also feature workshops for educators that will help teachers bring origins research to middle school classrooms.

"It's wonderful to be able to bring the research and education communities together to develop an extraordinarily rich exhibition and education program like Cosmic Origins," said Dusenbery.

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Assisting the Institute in the November planning meeting will be scientists and other experts from NASA's PlanetQuest, SIRTf, and Kepler missions; Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corporation, a Ball Corporation subsidiary that provides aerospace and high technology products to government and commercial customers; the SETI Institute, an organization dedicated to exploring the origin, nature and prevalence of life in the universe; the New York Hall of Science, a hands-on science and technology center located in New York City; the Lawrence Hall of Science, a museum operated by the University of California, Berkeley, that offers hands-on exhibits and supports K-12 science education; the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, which is in the process of greatly expanding its space science resources; the University of Colorado at Boulder's Center for Astrobiology, which is funded by NASA to perform multidisciplinary research on the search for life in the universe; the Space Telescope Science Institute of Baltimore, Maryland, which is responsible for the science operations of the Hubble Space Telescope; the Association of Science-Technology Centers, an organization of museums dedicated to furthering the public understanding of science; and the NASA Astrobiology Institute, created to carry out collaborative research and education in the interdisciplinary science of astrobiology.

The Space Science Institute is a nonprofit organization whose unique mission is to integrate world-class scientific research with innovative education and public outreach programs. The Institute's research program includes Earth science, space physics, planetary science, and astrophysics. Its research scientists have participated in many past NASA missions, and are participating in ongoing and upcoming missions, such as NASA's plans to send two more rovers to explore the surface of Mars, and to build and launch the James Webb Space Telescope, which will eventually replace the Hubble Space Telescope with a more powerful array of instruments.

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