



News Release

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**A CHEAP, HIGH-TECH OPTION FOR MUSEUMS:
STEPS PROJECT OFFERS NEW WAYS TO EDUCATE**

Learning happens in more than just the classroom. People gain knowledge through a wide variety of experiences and carry that knowledge throughout their lives.

Museums are one place where dazzlingly new and enlightening experiences can leave such a lasting impression.

A new collaborative effort – headed by the Space Science Institute in Boulder, Colo. and funded by the National Science Foundation – is providing a new way for museums to engender learning through interactive entertainment. STEPS – or the Science Theater Education Programming System – will soon be offered to museums large and small. It is a customizable presentation kit, which is intended to boost the learning experience of museum-goers around the nation.

“Museums of any size can order a box with this presentation kit, at low cost, and create media-enhanced theatrical performances tailored to virtually any topic,” said Principal Investigator of STEPS Brad McLain of the Space Science Institute.

The STEPS system is specifically designed to aid informal educators – such as museum educators – by enhancing the learning experience of patrons with a combination of live presentations, audience participation activities and high-production quality multimedia assets, McLain said.

“It’s an inexpensive alternative to expensive, traveling exhibits,” he said. “The low cost and plug-and-play technology of the system makes it possible for museums of all sizes to create and perform high-end science shows. Additionally, the system is being created by a nationally distributed team of museums, science centers, media firms, scientists, and researchers which is working together to make STEPS the best educational experience possible.”

Preceding the STEPS project, McLain, in association with Lucasfilm and NASA, had put together a suite of award-winning, high-tech museum theater presentations, which formed the basis for the current project. Dubbed “Space Research and You,” these shows focused on human space flight. During a recent kickoff meeting for the STEPS team, McLain unveiled the previous shows to give the team a taste of the high-caliber productions the system is capable of offering.

“The first set of productions we’re offering through STEPS will investigate the possibility of alien life in our universe – including intelligent alien life. These pilot shows will be called

“Space for Life” McLain said. “If these are successful, we hope to offer more productions in the future, which museums will be able to run with their existing systems.”

For more information regarding STEPS visit the project’s Web site at <http://www.stepsproject.org/>, or contact the Space Science Institute at (720) 974-5888.

The Space Science Institute is a nonprofit organization that carries out world-class research in space and Earth science, together with innovative science education programs that inspire and deepen the public’s understanding of planet Earth and its place in the grander Universe. The institute's integrated research and education programs span planetary science, space physics, astrophysics, astrobiology, and Earth science.

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