



"A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people."
~Andrew Carnegie



www.STEMlibraryConference.org

Libraries across the country have been reimagining their community role and leveraging their resources and public trust to strengthen community-based learning and foster critical thinking, problem solving, and engagement in STEM. What started some years ago as independent experiments has become a national movement. The Space Science Institute's National Center for Interactive Learning (NCIL), in partnership with the Lunar and Planetary Institute (LPI), received funding from the National Science Foundation for the first-ever *Public Libraries & STEM* conference that will take place at the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel in Colorado, August 20-22, 2015. Conference co-conveners are Dr. Paul Dusenbery (NCIL) and Keliann LaConte (LPI). The conference will bring library and STEM professionals and funders together to build productive relationships; explore promising practices in designing effective programs; help define a new 21st century vision of STEM learning in public libraries; and develop the foundation for a future evaluation and research agenda for libraries and their partners engaged in STEM education efforts. The conference's work and published proceedings will inform future development of informal STEM learning programs in libraries and their communities. The conference is expected to attract over 150 participants. There will be ample time for networking at conference events including visits to local points of interest such as the Denver Public Library and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

Conference sessions will be organized around five topics:

- 1) 21st Century Visions of STEM Learning in Public Libraries
- 2) Effective Collaboration Models between Libraries and STEM Organizations
- 3) Case Studies of Successful STEM Implementation in Libraries
- 4) Strategies for Reaching Groups Underrepresented in STEM Fields
- 5) Building a Foundation for Evaluation and Research for STEM Learning in Public Libraries

The results of a pre-conference needs assessment survey of libraries will provide an important benchmark for discussing future plans. STEM and library experts will also produce six "Background Reports" that will highlight research in how people learn through out-of-school-time (OST) experiences; the power of collective impact; audiences that libraries are serving; and the ways libraries are continuing to evolve to meet their community's needs. In order to provide ongoing channels of communications between STEM organizations and libraries, a *Leadership Forum* will be established following the conference for leaders and decision-makers from both the public library and informal STEM education and research communities.

National Organizing Committee

Members include: **Jeanne Braha** (Public Engagement Manager, AAAS), **Sharon Cox** (Library Manager, Queens Public Library), **Paul Dusenbery** (Director, National Center for Interactive Learning/SSI), **John Falk** (Sea Grant Professor of Free-Choice Learning, Oregon State University), **Margaret Glass** (Program Manager for Professional Development, ASTC), **Tena Hanson** (Immediate Past President, Association for Rural and Small Libraries and Director of the Estherville Public Library, Iowa), **Keliann LaConte** (Informal Education Lead, Lunar and Planetary

Institute), **Dale McCreedy** (Director of Gender, Adult Learning & Community Engagement, Franklin Institute), **Jennifer Nelson** (Minnesota State Librarian), **Marsha Semmel** (Education Consultant), **Sandy Toro** (Senior Library Program Officer, Institute of Museum and Library Services), and **Maddie Zeigler** (Museum Educator and Cultural Expert).

About NCIL and LPI



SSI's **National Center for Interactive Learning (NCIL)** is dedicated to expanding the understanding and participation of families, youth, educators, and citizens in science and technology through innovative programs and learning research. NCIL programs span a range of audience needs and delivery methods, including traveling museum exhibitions (e.g., *Giant Worlds: A Journey to the Outer Solar System* and *Great Balls of Fire: Comets, Asteroids, and Meteors*) and library exhibitions (e.g. *Discover Earth* and *Discover Health*); award-winning educational films (e.g., *Are We Alone?*), videos, and websites; hands-on teaching resources and activities; and educator workshops and webinars. Visit www.nc4il.org for more information. NCIL is leading a new direction for STEM education in partnership with the American Library Association (and many other strategic partners) to deliver interactive STEM exhibits and programming to public libraries, in Colorado and across the nation. This library initiative, called the *STAR Library Education Network (STAR_Net)*, is focused on reaching and positively impacting underserved and underrepresented communities.



LPI has designed space science programming resources with and for libraries for over fifteen years through the *Explore* program, and more recently, in partnership with the STAR_Net team. LPI has developed expertise in developing planning tools for children's and youth library staff to use in facilitating hands-on science and engineering learning experiences. The *Explore* model incorporates input from scientists and engineers, science educators, and library staff to design engaging, relevant experiences for the diverse youth of our nation, while taking into consideration the unique strengths and opportunities of the library learning environment. Training opportunities are designed to complement the existing skill set of library staff, while helping them develop the confidence and background knowledge needed to facilitate STEM learning experiences. Thanks to generous funding from NASA and the National Science Foundation, over 1,000 library staff have been trained to use the materials, and these partners are using them to attract new audiences and further their missions to instill habits of lifelong learning and literacy in their patrons. The Universities Space Research Association brings over 40 years of expertise in planning and implementing meetings for the scientific community. Through the expertise of meeting coordinators and LPI education staff, USRA supports the design and implementation of the *Public Libraries & STEM* conference.

For more information about the conference and the STAR Library Education Network (STAR_Net) visit www.STEMlibraryConference.org and www.STARnetlibraries.org.



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