

# NATIONAL CENTER FOR INTERACTIVE LEARNING

EXCITE. EXPLORE. DISCOVER.

Education & Outreach Newsletter



*Discover Space*, currently on display at the Aurora Public Library, Central Branch.



## **Giant Worlds Tour Schedule**

October 1 - December 31, 2010

Discovery Museum  
Bridgeport, Connecticut

February 1 - April 30, 2011

Lafayette Natural History Museum and  
Planetarium  
Lafayette, Louisiana

*Only two more dates available for this tour!*

Contact Lisa Curtis-- [curtis@spacescience.org](mailto:curtis@spacescience.org)



## **Great Balls of Fire Tour Schedule**

June 1st - December 31st 2011

Science Museum of Virginia  
Richmond, Virginia

October 1st - December 31st 2012

Catawba Science Center  
Hickory, North Carolina

*Dates available for this tour!*

Contact Lisa Curtis-- [curtis@spacescience.org](mailto:curtis@spacescience.org)

## **Discover Space at Aurora Public Library**

NCIL's traveling exhibit, *Discover Space*, is at the Aurora Public Library (in Colorado) until February 1, 2011. *Discover Space*, which has already been to five other Colorado libraries, provides science and technology learning experiences to library patrons.

Patti Bateman, director of the city of Aurora's Library & Cultural Services department says, "This exhibit offers a chance to bring space science and technology to life and make it relevant to the residents whose lives are touched indirectly by this subject matter every day."

*Discover Space* includes two exhibit areas, *Space Storms* and *Star Quest*. *Space Storms* introduces audiences to space weather, covering topics such as sunspots, coronal mass ejections, and magnetic storms. The *Space Storms* area also shows how space weather can harm astronauts, damage satellites, and disrupt power grids and communication systems on Earth. *Star Quest* explores how stars are born and how they die. Utilizing a touch screen computer, visitors are able to design interactive solar systems, complete with planets, asteroid belts, and multiple suns.

The *Discover Space* exhibition is the National Center for Interactive Learning's first foray into library exhibitions. This pilot program has been so successful, that the National Science Foundation has recently funded a follow-up project (*STAR\_Net*) that will feature two traveling library exhibitions, *Discover Earth* and *Discover Tech*. *STAR\_Net* will focus on reaching underserved populations and areas not served by large science centers. Partners in this project include the American Library Association, the Lunar and Planetary Institute, and the National Girls Collaborative Project.

## **New Project to Increase Interactive Capabilities of Museums**

The National Center for Interactive Learning is pleased to be taking part in a new National Science Foundation grant called Open Exhibits ([www.OpenExhibits.org](http://www.OpenExhibits.org)). Kate Haley Goldman, NCIL's Director of Learning Research and Evaluation, is Co-PI on the new project, which is run by PI Jim Spadaccini, the Principal Investigator of the award-winning multimedia firm Ideum.

This three-year project will develop, test, and disseminate a free suite of original, multi-touch enabled, open source exhibit software components. The software will enable science centers and museums to do something very few of them have been able to do in the past: assemble their own interactive computer based exhibits and online interactive resources.

Funded by the Informal Science Education division of NSF, this project opens the door for small and underfunded science centers to create and personalize interactive displays that are of interest to their specific audience. The ability to produce



NCIL's Dr Paul Dusenbery (above) and Dr James Harold participated in an educator's workshop at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science called *Exploring Small Worlds in the Solar System*.

The workshop introduced teachers to interactive approaches to solar system education. Activities included constructing a model solar system, creating models of asteroids and comets, and playing with a few of NCIL's computer-based interactives.

targeted interactions will increase accessibility to STEM content and ideas. According to Haley Goldman, "This project provides critical tools and support for small science museums and science centers to develop multimedia kiosks, touchscreens and multitouch tables, allowing those institutions to provide deeper levels of engagement for their visitors. Small institutions receive relatively little NSF funding and this will greatly help level the playing field."

The Open Exhibits software suite will consist of a core software package along with easy-to-use modules and templates to get museum educators comfortable with the idea that they can be active participants in the design of their interactives. The templates will include a current science news aggregator, a timeline-based exhibit, and a collections viewer. Educators will also have access to universal modules that allow a greater degree of customization and can drive further advancements to the software.

Haley Goldman will oversee the applied research of the interactives, developing a framework of best practices and up-to-date evaluation methods for assessing computer-based interactives in informal learning settings.



*Expanding the frontiers of knowledge and understanding*

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