

The Role of Observatories

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In one way or another our observatories are the source of the information that is ultimately used to convey the excitement of astronomy to the public. Large observatories have their own Public Information Officers and often large outreach activities, handling the press releases on behalf of visiting astronomers. Other observatories rely on the astronomers' home institution for press releases but have visiting programmes and outreach. Older observatories can become a historical attraction for the public, with outreach and many other activities. Innovative ideas are being pioneered by a number of observatories, helped by generous funding. This talk will give an overview from information received from observatories around the world of the various scales of enterprise, activities and 'reach'. In particular, it will attempt to identify what has worked, what hasn't and what, if any, lessons can be learned.