

THE ESA HUBBLE 15TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN

Lars Lindberg Christensen & Martin Kormmesser

ESA/Hubble, Munich, Germany

ABSTRACT

The 15th anniversary of the launch of the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope occurred on 24th April 2005. As Hubble is one of the most successful scientific projects in the world, ESA decided to celebrate this anniversary, among other things, with the production of a Hubble 15th Anniversary movie and a book, both called "Hubble, 15 years of discovery". The movie covers all aspects of the Hubble Space Telescope project—a journey through the history, the problems and the scientific successes of Hubble. With more than 700,000 multi-lingual DVDs distributed to the public, media, educators, decision-makers and scientists, the Hubble 15th anniversary campaign has been one of the largest such projects in Europe.

Hubble has exploited its unique scientific capabilities in regions where no other instruments can compete. The telescope consistently delivers super-sharp images and clean, uncontaminated spectra over the entire near-infrared to ultraviolet regions of the electromagnetic spectrum. This has opened up new scientific territory and has resulted in many paradigm-breaking discoveries.

Figure 1. The cover of one of the nearly 30 different versions of DVD covers that were produced in different languages and qualities. Here it is ESA's own "VIP" version with a 32 page booklet inside.



Exquisite quality images have enabled astronomers to gain entirely new insights into the workings of a huge range of different astronomical objects. Hubble has provided a visual overview of the underlying astrophysical processes taking place in these objects, ranging from planets in our Solar System to galaxies in the young Universe.

The renowned British astronomer Malcolm Longair writes in the preface to ESA's anniversary book: *"The Hubble Space Telescope has undoubtedly had a greater public impact than any other space astronomy mission ever. The images included in this beautiful volume are quite staggering in the detail they reveal about the Universe we live in and have already become part of our common scientific and cultural heritage."*

Many people agree that the long-term well-being and cultural development of European citizens depends on research and technological development. Information about science and scientists is a vital component of the scientific process, but the competition for attention in today's mass-media market is fierce. Attracting the attention of the younger generation with scientific information is especially difficult. Furthermore, the cultural and linguistic diversity of the member states within Europe demands the development of multi-lingual products.

The 15th anniversary of Hubble's launch presented the ideal opportunity for a dramatic and dynamic ESA project to grab the attention of the public, with a special emphasis on the younger generation, and to further the knowledge of science in general and astronomy in particular. In this project, Hubble was presented as a "science superstar" to make the largest possible impact and reach the maximum different target groups, including that section of the general population whose interest does not usually include science.

The project consisted of a number of activities, or vehicles to transport these messages: The full-length documentary movie "Hubble—15 Years of Discovery" issued on DVD and for broadcast TV; Events, planetarium shows and press meetings; Educational Material; Full-colour 120 page anniversary coffee-table book translated to several languages; Movie Poster; Movie soundtrack; Planetarium Show Package for planetarium show production. Read more about the individual activities on the Anniversary web page: <http://www.spacetelescope.org/projects/anniversary/>

The movie covers all aspects of the Hubble Space Telescope project—a journey through the history, the troubled early life and the ultimate scientific successes of Hubble. More than 700,000 copies of the DVD have been distributed, making it possibly the most widely available science documentary ever.

INTRODUCTION

THE PROJECT

THE MOVIE

THE BUSINESS MODEL

Bob Fosbury, a scientist from the European Space Agency, who has frequently used Hubble for his own research, presents the movie. Through the movie Bob explains various astronomical phenomena and describes the workings of a major telescope like Hubble. As an active, but approachable scientist himself, he brings an added depth and insight to the material while simultaneously helping to demystify the image of scientists. Bob can perhaps serve as a role model for the younger generation.

For science communication the project used a highly untraditional business model. By relying on the value of the DVD movie a snowball effect was created by making the project a multiple win-win situation for everyone involved, all the way from the participants in the production to the partners and the end-users. Collaborators and partners from more than 20 EU member states and third countries joined in the collaboration. For example, some of the partners took out advertisements in large national newspapers and magazines for the DVD, thereby promoting Hubble and ESA in a way not otherwise possible, and so reaching target groups that we would normally not reach.

HUBBLE DAY EVENTS

At more than 60 events in more than 20 countries all over Europe, Hubble's 15th anniversary was celebrated and the excitement of space shared: "Hubble Day", talks, the unveiling of two large, 3-metre anniversary images, exhibitions and more. Thousands of people heard talks by scientists and saw planetarium shows, images and movies of spectacular beauty.

CONCLUSION

The outcomes of the project are manifold. More than 700,000 copies of the DVD movie were distributed through more than 80 delivery points all over Europe (magazines, newspapers, science centres etc.). This makes it probably the most widely distributed science documentary ever. Nearly 30 different DVD 'packages' were made in different languages and quality to cater to the different needs of the partners. An estimated 10-20 million viewers or more have watched the movie through various TV channels. The movie has been shown at numerous venues such as planetaria, science centres, public observatories etc. Searching on the title of the DVD movie on Google gives an impressive 14,000 hits!

In many ways, the European Hubble anniversary project can be seen as a role model for trans-national science communication, and the informal network created here will be exploited for many years to come.

Acknowledgments

We would like again to thank all the individuals and organisations involved in this massive project! The list is unfortunately too large, but most are listed in the end-titles of the DVD. This project would never have happened without you!