

Published in the Penn-Franklin News on May 1, 2023.

Space Science Institute and Others

Last November, I wrote about the IF/THEN® Gender Equity Project funded to a total of one million dollars by Lyda Hill Philanthropies. Its purpose is to encourage girls and young women into careers in STEM (science/technology/engineering/math) by ambassador example. Awards, intended to cover all IF/THEN program costs, are targeted for “museums, public libraries, science centers, zoos, aquariums, public gardens, and other cultural institutions across the United States to install ready-to-go displays that promote equitable gender representation in STEM.” The collaboration of Delmont Public Library and Greensburg Hempfield Area Library applied for and received an award in the fall of 2022.

The Space Science Institute (SSI), located in Boulder, CO, is another key provider of paid-for resources to promote STEM. SSI is at once home to “cutting edge research in astrophysics, planetary science, and space physics” and “a leader in translating science into nationwide STEM education and outreach projects.” Libraries receive regular announcements of opportunities through STAR*net, which helps “library professionals build their STEM skills by providing ‘science-technology activities and resources’ (STAR) and training to use those resources.” STAR*net support comes from the National Science Foundation, NASA, the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, the American Library Association, and others. Here are some recently promoted resource examples.

“The Space Science Institute is pleased to announce a free NASA exhibit for public libraries. The next tour of ‘Discover Exoplanets: The Search for Alien Worlds’ will launch in June 2023, traveling to 9 libraries across the country. All public and tribal libraries are welcome to apply.”

“We are looking for 21 libraries in the Gulf Coast, and Great Lakes, and the Northeast regions of the United States to take part in *STEM Tales* – an exciting new project designed to engage children, ages 4-8, and their families in media read-alouds, STEM activities, and explore STEM at home via take-home kits. *STEM Tales* media will feature diverse STEM professionals (astronauts, scientists, and engineers) reading STEM-aligned picture books, underscoring the maxim, ‘If you can see it, you can be it.’”

“The Solar Eclipse Activities for Libraries (SEAL) project is delivering eclipse glasses, educational materials, solar science kits, and more to over 6000 libraries for the upcoming solar eclipses.” SEAL is addressing the 2023 annular eclipse and the 2024 total eclipse.

These kinds of professionally developed SSI programs become available on a continuing basis year to year, and they share purpose with the IF/THEN Gender Equity Project. Not only that, but there are other excellent programs that are available, too, not necessarily with a STEM point of view; for example, WQED Education offers “resources

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for educators of all learners.” Accordingly, I am an advocate for such strong, informed, standards-based educational programming for Libraries, especially when available at no cost, and that is why I am advocating now.

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