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Program Contact:
Anne Holland, 720-974-5876
Community Engagement Manager
aholland@spacescience.org

Media Contact:
Karly Pitman, 720-974-5874
Executive Director
pitman@spacescience.org

ECLIPSE 2017: A CELESTIAL ACHIEVEMENT FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

BOULDER, Colo.–September 25, 2017. 2.1 million pairs of eclipse glasses were distributed free through public libraries in the U.S. for the solar eclipse event on August 21, 2017. 7,100 organizations, including public library branches, bookmobiles, tribal libraries, library consortia, and state libraries, received a package of free safe-viewing glasses, plus a 24-page information booklet on how best to do public outreach programs about the eclipse. The project was supported, in part, by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, with additional help from Google, NASA, and the National Science Foundation (NSF). This was the single largest distribution of free glasses in the entire country and reached more people with glasses and information than any other educational effort for the 2017 eclipse. It is projected that this library eclipse project allowed 6 million people to observe the event safely.

The eclipse project was conceived by three astronomers, Andrew Fraknoi (Foothill College, Los Altos Hills, California), Dennis Schatz (Pacific Science Center, Seattle, WA), and Douglas Duncan (University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado.) Together they brought the idea to Paul Dusenbery, Director of the Space Science Institute's National Center for Interactive Learning (NCIL), located in Boulder, Colorado. NCIL manages the STAR Library Network (*STAR Net*) (supported by NASA, NSF, and other organizations) to help libraries with STEM programming. Information about its library eclipse program is available at: www.starnetlibraries.org/2017eclipse/. There you can see a final distribution map of participating libraries. "This was a great opportunity for libraries

and their communities to work together to participate in a celestial event of this scope," says Project Director Paul Dusenbery. "Many organizations like NASA, NSF, and the American Astronomical Society helped people understand the science of eclipses and to view them safely, and we were delighted to be part of this important educational effort."

Libraries played a vital role in the success of the event. According to the American Library Association's Public Awareness Office, "it was one of the largest science events that libraries have participated in."

CNN recently projected that about half the country watched some portion of the eclipse. This equates to roughly 150 million people. By comparison, the final game of the NBA championships had a viewership around 20 million people and the 2017 Super Bowl had 111 million. "The solar eclipse was truly the Super Bowl of Science" says Paul Dusenbery.

Participating libraries were projected to have conducted around 35,000 science programs before and during the eclipse, reaching an estimated 1,750,000 people.

NASA played an important role in providing essential information about the eclipse as well as streaming the event live for several locations along the path of totality. NASA's solar eclipse coverage was one of the biggest internet events in recent history and by far the biggest online event NASA has ever measured. More than 40 million views of their live broadcast on nasa.gov and multiple social platforms were recorded. This tops recent Super Bowl live streaming numbers and is in the realm of major news, sports and entertainment events. *STAR Net's NASA@ My Library* initiative is a NASA partner.

Many science partners were involved as well. Astronomers, astronomy hobbyists (e.g. Night Sky Network – http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov), Solar System Ambassadors (http://solarsystem.nasa.gov/ssa), museum educators, park rangers, and science teachers partnered with libraries in their own communities, helping to put on eclipse outreach events. Recent data from NASA's Solar System Ambassador (SSA) program shows that through the end of August, SSAs had logged 394 programs at libraries that served 55,000 participants. This was a dramatic increase from 2016. The Night Sky Network logged 296 events in libraries that reached 18,800 participants.

Hundreds of thank-you letters have been received and photos of events are being posted to the *STAR Net* flickr account (https://goo.gl/28LqxT). Menomin Hawpetoss, Information and Training Specialist, Menominee County Library, said "We had one of the biggest events our Library has ever seen. So, in my language, we say Waewaenen (Thank You)!" Many libraries had a response like this from a library in Michigan: "This event and your help attracted people who had never come to the library before, but more importantly, they got library cards, they checked out books, and they CAME BACK. This helped them see us for what we've become, not what we were when they were children."

About the STAR Library Network (*STAR Net*)
Libraries across the country have been reimagining their community role to strengthen community-based learning and foster critical thinking, problem solving, and engagement in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Public libraries serve people of all races, ages, and socio-economic backgrounds. They are becoming "on-ramps" to STEM learning by creating environments that welcome newcomers to the community.

NCIL's Moore Foundation project and *NASA@ My Library* initiative leverage and expand upon *STAR Net*, a hands-on learning network for libraries and their communities across the country (www.starnetlibraries.org). *STAR Net* focuses on helping library professionals build their STEM skills by providing "science-technology activities and resources" (STAR) and training to use those resources. It includes a *STEM Activity Clearinghouse*, blogs, a webinar series, workshops at conferences, and a monthly e-newsletter. Partners include the American Library Association, Association of Rural and Small Libraries, Collaborative Summer Library Program, Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, Afterschool Alliance, Cornerstones of Science, and many others.

About the National Center for Interactive Learning (NCIL)
NCIL is dedicated to expanding the understanding and participation of families, youth, teachers, and citizens in science and technology (www.nc4il.org). We foster collaboration between STEM professionals and educators to bring the wonder of science and engineering directly to people. Our programs span a range of audience needs and delivery methods, including traveling museum and public Library exhibitions; educational films, videos, and websites; hands-on resources and activities; and educator workshops. Our programs are designed to be accessible to all, and to inspire the next generation of STEM innovators. They have a positive impact on rural and urban communities nationwide and reach underserved audiences with inspirational, fun, and innovative STEM activities.

About the SPACE SCIENCE INSTITUTE
The Space Science Institute (SSI) is a nonprofit, public benefit research and education 501(c)(3) corporation founded in 1992 with a vision to expand humankind's understanding and appreciation of planet Earth, our Solar System, and the universe beyond. SSI's mission is to (a) enable scientists to make new discoveries, (b) increase science and technology literacy for people of all ages and backgrounds, and (c) inspire youth to pursue science-technology education and career opportunities. It is headquartered in Boulder, Colorado, with locations distributed across the U.S. and internationally.

www.spacescience.org

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