WAC recognises that the material culture and places associated with space exploration are significant at individual, local, organisational, national and international levels. As space industries and eventual space colonisation develop in the 21st century, it is necessary to consider what and how elements of this cultural heritage should be preserved for the benefit of present and future generations.

The material culture of space exploration extends from the surface of the Earth to beyond the Solar System. In astronomy and rocketry its beginnings date from well before the Second World War. Sites, places and objects related to space exploration include research and development sites; launch facilities and tracking stations on Earth; satellites and so-called space junk in orbit round Earth; spacecraft and space debris in orbit around other bodies in the Solar System; landing and crash sites on the Moon, Mars, Venus, a small selection of asteroids and soon some of the moons of the outer planets, as well as both space and Earth-based telescopes and associated equipment and infrastructure.

As a basis for effective management, the significance of the material culture of space exploration must be understood. The Task Force will:

- Identify themes relating to space exploration with specific reference to the impact of space exploration on non-spacefaring nations, developing countries and Indigenous peoples;
- Investigate ways of assessing significance at individual, local, organisational, national and international levels.

Some sites, places and objects may have significance far beyond the local or national level. The Task Force will:

- Identify examples of such places, sites and objects that have exceptional cultural heritage value and whose preservation will benefit all humankind;
- Investigate avenues for preservation within existing structures, for example, the World Heritage Convention;
- Propose a set of cultural, historical, social and scientific criteria for preserving space heritage places of exceptional cultural heritage value.

The cooperation of international space agencies, national space agencies, the aerospace industry and the principal astronomical and astronautical associations is an essential part in ensuring the appropriate management of the cultural heritage of space exploration. The Task Force will:

- Identify relevant international and national organisations;
- Lobby relevant international and national bodies to ensure participation in preservation efforts;
- Explore avenues for raising sufficient funds for the preservation and where feasible conservation of at least a selection of space heritage places, sites and objects deemed of greater or exceptional significance.

The Space Heritage Task Force will present an interim report at the next WAC Inter-Congress conference.

A.C. Gorman and J.B. Campbell, November 2003

For more information, please email Alice Gorman or John Campbell