

COMMS & EDUCATION



When NASA decided to improve the visitor experience in its physical and virtual lobbies, the agency turned to JPL's Communications and Education Directorate. The Lab also dove into home improvement, hosting thousands of visitors and completing a monument to its founders. Students descended on JPL for prestigious competitions, and the Lab's missions inspired fans, creators, and even a poet laureate.

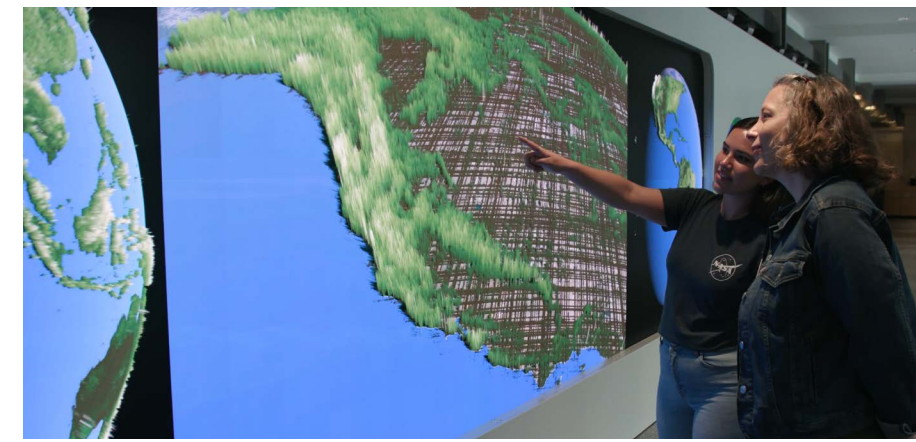
Left: Summer interns gathered for a group photo by the JPL sign located on the Mall.



Above: Visitors to the Earth Information Center in Washington D.C. experienced the “Space for Earth” exhibit.

NASA Makeover Made in Pasadena

Communications and Education Directorate teams championed NASA initiatives from the front door of the agency’s head office to the lowest level of its virtual home.



Top: EIC visitors viewed the large hyperwall that displays real-time Earth data.

Bottom: NASA Administrator Bill Nelson spoke before the EIC ribbon-cutting ceremony at NASA Headquarters on June 21.

Inside the lobby of NASA’s D.C. headquarters, the Earth Information Center opened in June 2023, realizing NASA Administrator Bill Nelson’s dream of building a “mission control” center for Earth. The exhibit offers public access to real-time Earth science and climate data in an immersive design that lets visitors engage with data-driven artistic representations of Earth’s interconnectedness and changing vital signs. A DesignLab team partnered with NASA Headquarters and Goddard Space Flight Center’s Science Visualization Studio for many components of the EIC, with JPL designing and developing the Earth Pulse sculpture, the hyperwall, the “Space for Earth” experience, the “Eyes on Earth” kiosk, and the 16-foot red NASA worm logo outside the lobby doors.

Other crucial support for the agency’s mission took place mostly out of public view. Another DesignLab team — working with partners across NASA — led an extensive transformation of NASA’s web presence. This multiphase effort involved gathering more than 23,000 web pages under a single architecture and rebuilding all content behind the browser into a JPL-configured management system. The first beta sites launched in July, followed by the September launch of the flagship nasa.gov and science.nasa.gov domains.

The Lab Reopens and Inspires

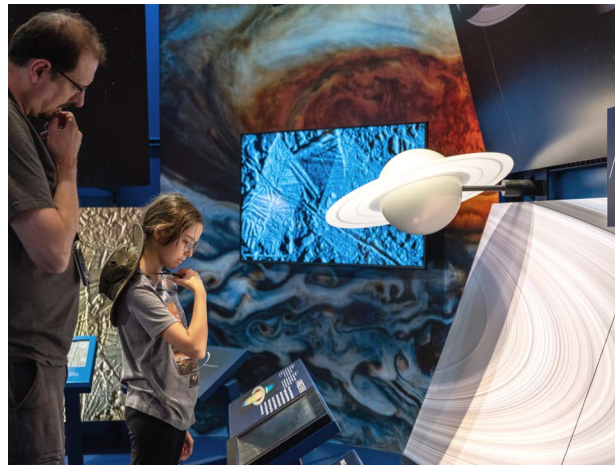
Open for Exploration

After more than three years of pandemic-imposed restrictions, the Lab again welcomed crowds of space fans for Explore JPL. More than 600 red-shirted JPLers spread out to greet, guide, and educate 23,000 visitors over the span of a weekend in April. In nearly every nook and cranny on Lab, guests enjoyed displays, models, robots, science exhibits, and the opportunity to speak with scientists, engineers, researchers, and other JPL employees.



Kids at Work

Late summer brought another wave of curious onlookers when more than 650 young enthusiasts took part in activities across the Lab for Take Our Children to Work Day. Kids enjoyed stomp rockets, inflatable planetariums, robot races, and a group photo with Director Laurie Leshin as they learned about the projects and missions their family members were working on at JPL.



Reevaluating our Origins

A year of return to tradition also brought reevaluation of JPL's origins. In May, Director Laurie Leshin, Deputy Director Larry James, Chief Inclusion Officer Neela Rajendra, and the Asian American Council unveiled a physically and metaphorically transparent update to the 1968 Founders' Plaque. Created by the Lab Engagement team, the glass overlay contextualizes and names all founders and supporters involved in the rocket tests of 1936 that established the Lab. The overlay includes the previously omitted names of theoretician Qian Xuesen, funder and photographer Weld Arnold, and observer Jeanne Bollay.

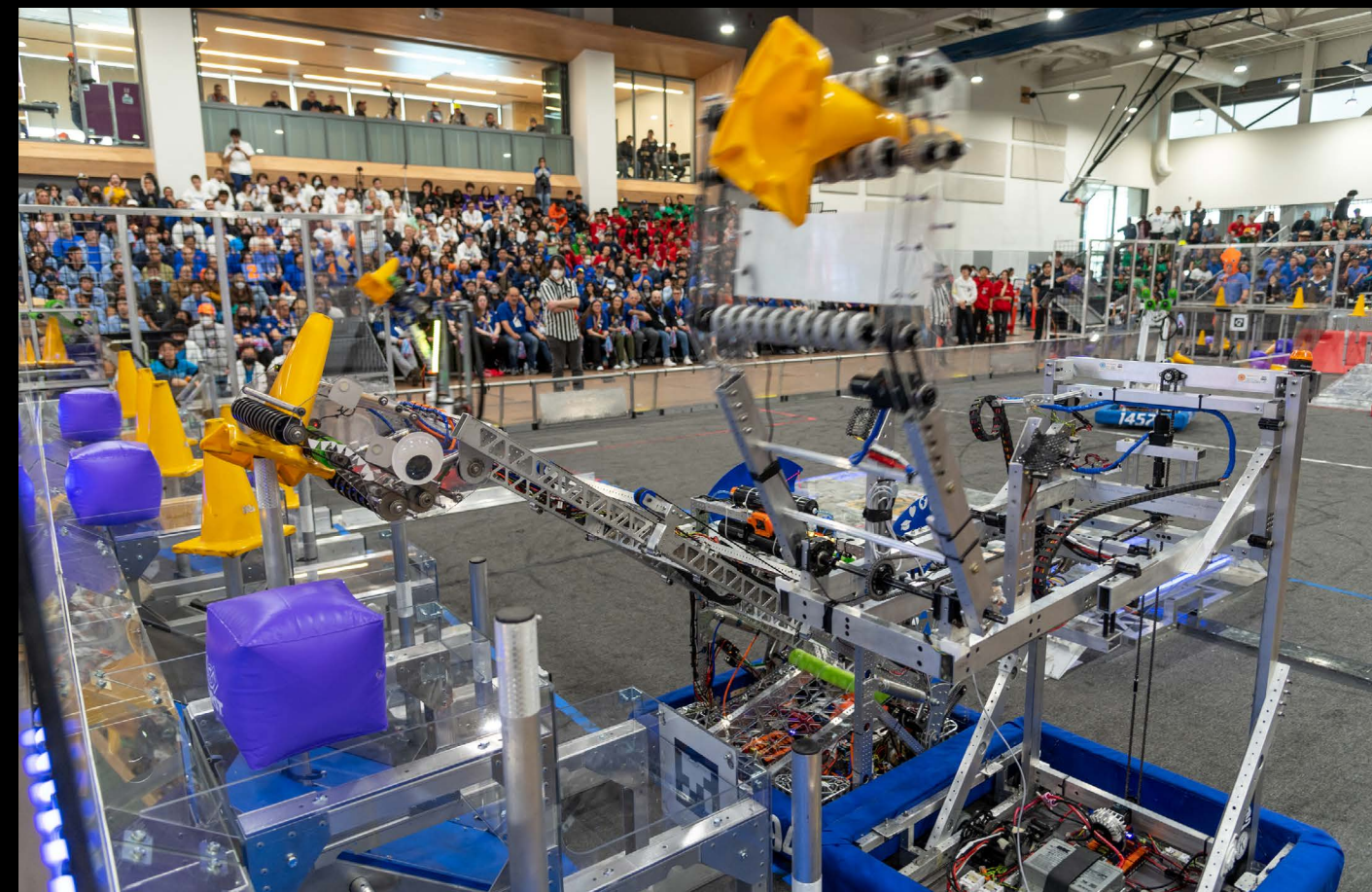


Future Scientists Make Their Mark on Lab

More than 700 college and high school students spent summer 2023 on Lab for Education Office and Human Resources internships supporting nearly 500 mentors in 265 groups.

In February, JPL hosted its 31st regional National Science Bowl — a nationwide contest challenging student teams in a wide range of science disciplines. The following month, JPL hosted its 24th regional Ocean Sciences Bowl — a competition focusing solely on ocean sciences and environmental stewardship. Also in March, JPL sponsored seven local teams in the 22nd annual Los Angeles FIRST Robotics competition, an event in which high school students design and construct a task-oriented robot to meet a unique set of game challenges. And at year's end, JPL hosted its annual Invention Challenge, in which high school teams and JPLers compete to accomplish a specified engineering task. As in years past, the high schoolers (and potential future JPLers) beat out the seasoned engineers.

Below: Students test their robotic creations at the JPL-sponsored FIRST Robotics competition.



Missions and Imaginations Take Flight

Media Relations and Public Engagement outreach teams took part in sharing the Lab's key initiatives with the world, from mission media days, to long-awaited launches, to hosting a panel at L.A. Comic-Con, to public calls for mission-inspired art, and even to a literary event at the Library of Congress.

In October, mission members and their families gathered in von Kármán Auditorium to watch the 6,000-pound Psyche spacecraft launch aboard SpaceX's Falcon Heavy, beginning its six-year, 2.2-billion-mile journey to our solar system's main asteroid belt. The Psyche mission is the first to explore a world made mostly of metal in an effort to solve the mysteries of planetary cores similar to our own. Media Relations, Public Engagement, DesignLab, and Education teams were tapped to support this mission through a mix of print and digital posters, stickers, and public outreach campaigns like the #PsycheSpaceCRAFTY call for artistic submissions from the public.

JPL attracts the nation's finest space scientists and engineers. But poets? When Europa Clipper's "Message

Below: U.S. Poet Laureate Ada Limón visits Europa Clipper in High Bay 1 at JPL.



in a Bottle" campaign started to gain traction, the Public Engagement team enlisted the 24th U.S. Poet Laureate, Ada Limón, as the mission's public voice. As part of her commission, Limón wrote "In Praise of Mystery: A Poem for Europa" exclusively for the mission. The poem links Earth to Europa via their shared life-harboring ingredient: water. In June, Limón presented the poem at the Library of Congress, and its words — along with the names collected for the Message in a Bottle campaign (well over two million) — will be engraved upon Europa Clipper's casing before it makes its 1.8-billion-mile journey toward the Jupiter system.

Media Relations and Public Engagement also supported outreach for ongoing Mars missions in 2023. Model replicas of

NASA's Perseverance rover and Ingenuity Mars Helicopter have been touring museums across the U.S. as part of the "Roving With Perseverance" roadshow. In 2023, the models traveled to museums in six states, giving visitors a full-scale representation of the size and function of each Mars craft.

As Ingenuity's mission began to spin down, the directorate looked toward a farewell announcement in early 2024. The mighty little chopper was sent to Mars to determine if powered, controlled flight on the Red Planet could be possible. It was proven possible, by year's end, 70 times over.

Considering only five flights were expected or even hoped for, Ingenuity's success was out of sight.

Top left: Family and friends gathered in the Von Kármán auditorium to watch the Psyche mission launch.

Top right: Life-size models of the Perseverance rover and Ingenuity Mars Helicopter at the Museum of Science in Boston

Bottom left: Comic-Con participants sign up to send their names to Jupiter with Europa Clipper.

Bottom right: A Media Relations host prepares for a Psyche news conference.