

“Librarian’s Shelf” by Brad Hruska

To Infinity and Beyond!!

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of attending a workshop entitled “Explore! Jupiter’s Family Secrets” at the Grand Island Public Library. The two-day event was hosted by NASA and provided Youth Services and Young Adult Librarians with program ideas that they could conduct within their own communities. Not only was this event fun and informative, but it also dispelled numerous “myths” people have regarding the solar system. I would like to take this opportunity and share with you four common misconceptions I had about the universe and space exploration.

To begin, I’d like to turn your attention to the stars. Most of us have seen flicks like “Star Trek” that have various space vessels cruising past millions of stars making their way to the “Final Frontier.” The misunderstanding with this visual description is that stars are actually located hundreds of millions of miles apart, so seeing billions of stars fly by as one goes through solar system could not have happened.

Stars are not the only misunderstood objects within our galaxy. Our Moon, too, has its own set of misconceptions. In “Superman-Man of Steel,” our spandex-wearing hero encounters General Zod and his crew on the gravity less Moon. In the film, Superman tosses one of Zod’s cronies deep into space; however, this action would not have happened because despite popular belief, the Moon possess a gravitational pull which would not have allowed Zod’s right-hand man to be tossed into the heavens.

Another misconception we, earthlings, have is the way in which rockets/probes travel. In movies like “Star Wars,” space vessels venture to their locations in straight paths. In reality, however, shuttles actually travel in oval patterns. The purpose behind this circular movement is so the crafts can gain the needed momentum to enter into a planet’s atmosphere.

The last misconception I would like to address involves the rotation speed of the EIGHT planets. Many individuals believe that planets like Jupiter, Saturn, and Neptune rotate at an abnormally fast pace compared to Earth’s; however, it is actually planets like Earth and Venus that have the abnormal speed rotation. It is believed within the science community that all of the planets, at one time, rotated at the same speed; however, Earth and Venus’ rotations were slowed when an object collided into them.

To help you and your children better understand the galaxy in which we all live in, I would like to recommend the following texts: “Visual Encyclopedia of Space,” “Out-of-this-World Astronomy” by Joe Rhatigan, “8 Spinning Planets” by Brian James, “Earth” by Darlene Stille, “Super Stars” by David Aguilar, “Boy, Were We Wrong about the Solar System!” by Kathleen Kudlinski. These books are guaranteed to provide readers with accurate, up-to-date information. If you have any questions about the titles featured or would like to know if the Columbus Public Library has a certain space themed DVD, please feel free to contact me at (402) 564-7116 opt. 4.