



MIT MUSEUM PRESS RELEASE

Date: October 15, 2003

Contact:

JACK CURTIS

(617) 253-4422

jcurtis@mit.edu

MIT MUSEUM CELEBRATES CENTENARY OF WRIGHT BROTHERS FIRST FLIGHT

**Hub of the Air Universe: A Century of Flight in Massachusetts
November 14 – September 5, 2004 at the MIT Museum**

Cambridge, MA (October 2003)

When Orville and Wilbur Wright first flew 100 years ago, the airplane was only a curiosity. Aviation gradually evolved from spectacle to system. The Massachusetts aviation community can claim a disproportionate number of the world's pioneering figures in the field—from founders of the leading companies to editors of key aviation publications; from governmental leaders to explorers and inventors—and critical technologies such as radar.

To mark the centennial of the first heavier-than-air powered flight, the MIT Museum presents Hub of the Air Universe: A Century of Flight in Massachusetts, which showcases the Massachusetts aviation community—the individuals, institutions, and inventions—that made the airplane into the vital technology it is in our lives today. On view from November 14 through September 5, 2004, the exhibition features artifacts, artwork, and images, many never before on display, from the MIT Museum's collection.

One-of-a-kind artifacts include a piece of the original fabric that covered the Wright Brother's 1903 Flyer, one of the oldest wind-tunnel models used by MIT students and faculty, hand-colored lithographs, glass lantern slides, parts of human-powered airplanes built by MIT students in the 1970s and 1980s, and even a small rocket. The exhibition focuses on both on the efforts and achievements centered at MIT as well as throughout the state's aviation industry. In conjunction with Hub of the Air Universe, the Museum presents Flight: The Next Hundred Years, a panel discussion co-sponsored by the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics (November 19); a daylong event, Festival of Flight (December 6); and a curator talk, First Flight, First Fabric (December 17).

When people think of famous places associated with the history of aviation, Massachusetts is not among the first sites to come to mind. During the 1940s and '50s, to

offset that narrow notion, the late Ralph M. Eastman, an ardent supporter of aviation in the state and vice president of the State Street Trust Company of Boston (and the collector who assembled the Museum's State Street Bank Aeronautical Collection) frequently give his "Hub of the Air Universe" speech to any non-believer. It would be easy to dismiss his argument as overblown hubris, but the truth is Eastman had it right. The contributions of MIT, General Electric, Raytheon, and Draper Laboratory, for example, occupy a critical and extensive place in the history of aeronautics. Even more significant is the nurturing environment that fostered an impressive array of aviation researchers, inventors, and industrialists throughout Massachusetts.

"The exhibition provides an intimate and evocative look at aviation through the lens of Massachusetts and MIT," states Deborah Douglas, MIT Museum curator of science and technology and aviation history specialist. "Imagine yourself walking into the bedroom of a young aviation enthusiast, and seeing a wealth of posters, photographs, models, and memorabilia, and newspaper clippings that chronicle the latest records and achievements."

Suggested Listing:

Hub of the Air Universe: A Century of Flight in Massachusetts

November 14 - July 3, 2004

To celebrate the centennial of the Wright Brothers' first heavier-than-air powered flight, the Museum showcases the Massachusetts aviation community—the individuals, institutions, and inventions—that helped make the airplane a vital technology in our daily lives.

Related Programs:

Flight: The Next Hundred Years

November 19

7:00pm; reception to follow

MIT Technology and Culture Forum presents a discussion with Joseph Corn, American Studies Program, Stanford University; Allen Hagerty, retired vp and general manager of engineering, Boeing Military and Aircraft Missile System; and Jane Garvey, former administrator, Federal Aviation Administration. Moderated by Larry Young, MIT Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics, co-sponsor of the event.

MIT Museum
265 Massachusetts Avenue
Free admission

Festival of Flight ***Festival of Flight***

December 6
Noon – 5:00pm

Presented in conjunction with the exhibition, Hub of the Air Universe: A Century of Flight in Massachusetts, this daylong array of speakers, hands-on activities, and presentations gives visitors the chance to learn about the activities and resources of local flight-related organizations such as Massachusetts Aviation Historical Society, NE Aerobatic Club, and Women in Aviation. Speakers include Charles “Chip” Collins, senior engineering test pilot for Draper Laboratory, who’ll look back at his flights; and Linda Fuhrman, program manager for Draper Lab’s Space Systems, who’ll discuss future NASA projects, including the Orbital Spaceplane.

Free with Museum admission

Object Lessons: First Flight, First Fabric—Aviation’s Most Precious Relic

December 17
Noon – 1:00pm

One hundred years ago today Orville and Wilbur Wright flew into history. In the Museum’s monthly series of brown-bag gallery talks, Deborah Douglas, curator of the current exhibition, Hub of the Air Universe and aviation historian, discusses the invention of the airplane and the impact of aviation on society. Douglas also relates the story behind a certificate bearing a one-inch square of fabric—aviation’s most precious relic—from the Wright’s 1903 flyer, and details MIT’s role in the first-ever public display of the Flyer on campus in 1916.

Free admission; refreshments provided