

The Future of a *National* Spaceflight Collection?

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The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum (NASM) strives to memorialize the national development of spaceflight, as opposed to documenting the history of space exploration in general. This specific focus on American space exploration, and the Smithsonian's role as a national institution, has framed the museum's collections rationale for decades. Historically, NASA and US-contractor produced hardware have accounted for the majority of NASM's spaceflight collection. But the rapid expansion of the commercial space sector, and the continued fostering of international partnerships, elicits the question of what comprises American spaceflight. Factoring in limited exhibit space and storage capacity further complicates these decisions. How should the evolution of the space industry impact the American national collection? This presentation examines these new challenges facing NASM curators, and considers how to develop a collections rationale nimble enough to respond to the shifting landscape of the American space sector.