

The Search for Life Beyond Earth: A science museum exhibition

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The New York Hall of Science has developed and produced a 3,500 sq ft exhibition called *The Search for Life Beyond Earth* with support from NSF and NASA. The big idea or main message of the exhibition is: discoveries on Earth of organisms living in extreme environments and an understanding of the role water plays in life on Earth are informing our search for life beyond Earth. The exhibition is divided into several Earth environments that are reminiscent of places in our solar system: Atacama Desert, Yellowstone National Park, Lake Vostok, Deep Sea Vents areas, and Methane seeps in the Gulp of Mexico, for example. In each area we make a connection between what we know about the biology of organisms in these areas and what might be living on Mars, Europa and deeper in the cosmos. Other areas in the exhibition cover searching for water on Mars by driving a rover, Water and Life, How We Know Life, Life Hunter and Deep In the Night Sky: Searching for Terrestrial Planets. There are videos of scientists talking about their work, living organisms, artifacts (a piece of the Murchison meteorite to illustrate one way we know of the chemistry of space), a model of the Alvin for younger children, an artists interpretation of comets and interactive compute exhibits. I will present different areas of the exhibition, with examples, to illustrate how we engage a general audience in the excitement of searching for life.