

PRESS RELEASE

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CASSINI/HUYGENS

Your signature or message in space!

Cassini/Huygens, a joint ESA/NASA mission, will be launched in October 1997.

After a journey lasting almost 7 years, which will take the spacecraft to an orbit around Saturn, ESA's Huygens probe will be released over Titan, Saturn's largest moon, and will examine its environment and surface.

On the occasion of this unique scientific mission, ESA is planning to fly a CD-ROM aboard Huygens, on which all the signatures and messages contributed by Europeans will be borne away to Titan. These will be collected by ESA on a special Internet site, whose address is:

<http://www.huygens.com>

ESA and the media are linking up for this unusual operation, making arrangements for sending a token of human life into deep space. This is an idea that goes back to the 1970s, when the Pioneer 10 and 11 space probes were fitted with metal plates carefully engraved with information about life on Earth.

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Today's digital storage technology enables a large number of signatures and messages to be recorded on a single CD-ROM for dispatch into space.

ESA is proposing cooperation to the media in two ways:

1. **Information on Huygens.** ESA will provide the media with all the information they need about the Huygens programme, including written, photographic and video material (request form attached).
2. **Collection of signatures.** The media will announce the operation and ask their readers, listeners and viewers to send messages and signatures via the Internet, either using their own sites, in which case they will need to create hypertext links with the ESA/Huygens site, or directly to the special ESA/Huygens site that has been set up.

Signatures and messages will be accepted until 1 March 1997, though the Huygens site will remain active after that date. The information it provides on the Cassini/Huygens mission will be regularly updated, at least until the spacecraft is launched in October 1997.

This operation, the first of its kind in the world, will enable ESA and its media partners to bring European space activities to the notice of readers, listeners and viewers from all countries in an original and spectacular way.