

Lecture Summary

The lecture will be in three parts. This will include the role of a Docent at the Udvar-Hazy Center and two of the museum's major artifacts, the SR-71 Blackbird and the Space Shuttle.

Role of a Docent at The Steven Udvar-Hazy Center

What exactly is a Docent? It's not a term that's used very much if at all in the UK. Mike will outline how he became a Docent, his role and what it's like to volunteer at the greatest 'toy store' for an aviation enthusiast.

SR-71 Blackbird

One of the most popular artifacts at the Udvar-Hazy Center is the SR-71 Blackbird, a product of the Lockheed Skunk Works. It first flew in 1964 at more than 3 times the speed of sound, no air breathing machine has gone faster since then and it still looks amazing. What they achieved considering the tools they had at their disposal (all calculations using a slide rule), was remarkable. Any engineer would certainly be interested to understand the challenges they faced and the solutions they came up with.

Space Shuttle

Perhaps the most imposing artifact in the museum, the Space Shuttle was the most complex space vehicle design of its era and represents an incredible engineering achievement.

Presenter bio

Following a Technician Apprenticeship and a HND in Mechanical Engineering at Derby Lonsdale College, Mike started in RB211 Technical Services progressing through mostly customer facing positions. This was across Global customer-base and encompassed all civil engines across the thrust range from AE3007 through to the Trent. This included working in Derby, Reston and Indianapolis as well as with International Aero Engines in Connecticut.

After a 42-year career with Rolls-Royce in the UK and US, Mike became a Docent at Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Steven Udvar-Hazy Center, near Washington Dulles airport.

Mike lives in Purcellville Virginia with his wife Liz. As well as being a Docent he is Deputy General Secretary of the Rolls-Royce Retirees Association of North America. He loves spending time with their grandchildren, enjoys F1, Indycar and is a fanatical Swindon Town supporter, Washington Capitals and Indianapolis Colts fan as well as being an industrial strength Beatles geek.