

Online Archive Chronicles 'Field of Victories' in Space

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Fifty years to the day since Yury Gagarin blasted off from Baikonur to become the first man in space, the start of the era of space exploration is entering the realm of history.

Thanks to a new web site, would-be cosmic historians of the era of space — or the simply curious — can immerse themselves in all the original material they can get their hands on.

The new site at www.pobeda-kosmos.ru (or the Cyrillic URL www.победа-космос.рф) brings together vast audio, visual and documentary archives relating to the Soviet and Russian space programs.

The archive, produced by the Communications and Press Ministry with help from Microsoft and Rostelecom, took three years to assemble and includes declassified documents.

It holds more than 11,000 pages of official documents, 600 video and audio clips, and more

than 1,700 photographs.

The online archive traces the history of space exploration from the launch of Sputnik in 1957 to U.S. businessman Denis Tito's 2001 stay on the International Space Station as the world's first space tourist.

More than 500 people from 40 countries have flown in space since Gagarin made his first flight.

But as the web address suggests, the site indulges in plenty of space race-era triumphalism.

"Space is a field of Russian victories," Communications and Press Minister Igor Shchyogolev said in a statement released to mark the launch at a ceremony in Moscow's Polytechnical Museum's space exhibition on Monday.

"The site gives open and convenient access to reliable and often unique information. ... Its main treasure is digitized documents of the great era of the conquest of space," he said.

Online archives relating to 20th-century triumphs have become something of a fad in recent years.

Last year saw the introduction of the Chronicles of Victory (available at www.pobeda-info.ru), a month-by-month online archive covering Russian involvement in World War II from 1941 to 1945.

The chronicles, launched on the 65th anniversary of the victory in World War II also used Microsoft technology.

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