

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/living-and-working-in-space/>

The speaker describes their interest in studying NASA's Skylab program, particularly the conversation transcripts between astronauts and mission control during space missions in the 1970s. They highlight Skylab as one of the first space stations and emphasize its role in exploring what it means to live and work in space. By examining the extensive transcripts, original recordings, and design specifications, the speaker aims to uncover insights into the human and social dynamics of space missions that go beyond traditional scientific documentation.

The research focuses on the unique environment aboard Skylab, where astronauts not only conducted experiments but also gained insights into their experiences and interactions. The speaker notes that human factors research, which addresses how humans interact with technology, plays a critical role in designing space missions. They discuss the balance between rigorous scientific quantification (such as ergonomics and design specifications) and the more qualitative, human-centered aspects of astronaut life.

The speaker also critiques the traditional engineering-centric perspective in space exploration and highlights the importance of incorporating social science insights for informing future missions. They argue that human factors research should account for qualitative experiences and interactions that cannot be captured through purely scientific approaches.

Furthermore, they share anecdotes about communication challenges faced by astronauts on Skylab, demonstrating how intricate and social the environment can be. The overarching conclusion of their work is the need to expand the understanding of living and working in space to include qualitative experiences, advocating for an approach that values both scientific and social perspectives in the design of future space missions.