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Contract on SPARK, the free interactive web tool to help drive innovation, signed between UIC and RSSB during WCRR 2013 in Sydney

(Sydney, 28 November 2013) Today, 28 November 2013 the Memorandum of Cooperation regarding the collaboration between the UIC and RSSB of the UK about the sharing of knowledge related to rail research has been signed in Sydney at the occasion of the WCRR 2013 and the Plenary meeting of the UIC International Rail Research Board (IRRB).

The Memorandum regarding the common use of the SPARK rail research knowledge base was signed by Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, Director General of the International Union of Railways (UIC) and Anson Jack, the Deputy Chief Executive of RSSB, during a joint session of the World Congress on Railway Research 2013 Organizing and Executive Committees and the UIC International Rail Research Board.

It concerns the agreement to work together in partnership to maintain and enhance SPARK - the knowledge sharing platform that provides for access to rail research and other relevant knowledge - for the benefit of the members of UIC, RSSB and its members, as well as the global rail community.

A shared vision

The UIC and RSSB share the same vision to provide a single repository of knowledge to support the rail community efforts in research, development and innovation and agree to work together to deliver it. This vision includes making the repository widely available, providing a positive user experience, enriching its content both directly and indirectly, minimising barriers to access, and avoiding duplication of information and knowledge.

SPARK

SPARK is a free web tool for the rail operating and wider research communities to share and find information on rail research, innovation and any other rail related information that users choose to share. At the heart of SPARK is a library where users can contribute their knowledge and find knowledge provided by others. It is the virtual space for rail professionals and researchers to network and cooperate with others , showcase their work to the wider community which can reduce duplication and stimulate and speed up innovation. It contains a wealth of content from many rail stakeholders and this content is growing day by day.

SPARK provides a “shop window” for research information, organisations and research capacities and capabilities. It facilitates networking between users, funders and holders of knowledge and offers a match-making forum for opportunities, issues and solutions.

Rail professionals and any interested parties can register and access SPARK at the “Reader” level. But this agreement is more about encouraging users to become “Contributors” by uploading relevant rail material themselves. This status gives access to more content – for instance all the papers and posters from the World Congress on Railway Research which finished just before this agreement was signed will be available to SPARK Contributors . There are also sections that enable UIC IRRB and RSSB members to share their material with other members.

UIC and RSSB will work together closely to secure the on-going success of SPARK. RSSB owns and manages SPARK, and will continue to load its own research material, while the UIC will support the partnership for SPARK by adding content, getting UIC staff to use and contribute to the platform, and engage in promotional activities to grow SPARK user base among UIC members. Material that is stored on SPARK remains the IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) of and in the ownership of whoever had the rights to place it there.

SPARK can be accessed through www.sparkrail.org as well as through the UIC Research Portal www.railway-research.org which contains additional information such as on the UIC Rail Research & Innovation Awards etc.

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