

In article <1pcgaa\$do1@access.digex.com> prb@access.digex.com (Pat) writes:

>Now isn't that always the kicker. It does seem stupid to drop
>a mission like Magellan, because there isn't 70 million a year
>to keep up the mission. You'd think that ongoing science could
>justify the money. JPL gets accused of spending more than necessary,
>probably some validity in that, but NASA does put money into some
>things that really are Porcine. Oh well.

I attended a colloquium at Goddard last fall where the head of the operations section of NASA was talking about what future missions were going to be funded. I don't remember his name or title off hand and I have discarded the colloquia announcement. In any case, he was asked about that very matter: "Why can't we spend a few million more to keep instruments that we already have in place going?"

His response was that there are only so many \$ available to him and the lead time on an instrument like a COBE, Magellan, Hubble, etc is 5-10 years minimum. If he spent all that could be spent on using current instruments in the current budget environment he would have very little to nothing for future projects. If he did that, sure in the short run the science would be wonderful and he would be popular, however starting a few years after he had retired he would become one of the greatest villains ever seen in the space community for not funding the early stages of the next generation of instruments. Just as he had benefited from his predecessor's funding choices, he owed it to whoever his successor would eventually be to keep developing new missions, even at the expense of cutting off some instruments before the last drop of possible science has been wrung out of them.

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