

REACHING AN INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE WITH LUNAR SCIENCE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL OBSERVE THE MOON NIGHT. B. C. Hsu,¹ L. V. Bleacher², D. Daou³, B. Day³, A. Jones¹, A. Shaner⁴, S. Shipp⁴. ¹Lunar and Planetary Institute, (NASA GSFC, 8800 Greenbelt Rd, Greenbelt MD 20771 Brooke.C.Hsu@nasa.gov), ²NASA GSFC, (8800 Greenbelt Rd, Code 690, Greenbelt, MD 20771). ³Lockheed Martin (NASA ARC, Moffett Field, CA 94043). ⁴Lunar and Planetary Institute (3600 Bay Area Blvd, Houston, TX 77058).

Introduction: International Observe the Moon Night (InOMN) is designed to engage lunar science and education communities, our partner networks, amateur astronomers, space enthusiasts, and the general public in annual lunar observation campaigns that share the excitement of lunar science and exploration. Additionally, InOMN enables the public to maintain its curiosity about the Moon and gain a better understanding of the Moon's formation, its evolution, and its place in the sky.



Background: On August 1, 2009, Education and Public Outreach (EPO) teams for the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) and the Lunar CRater Observing and Sensing Satellite (LCROSS) held public events at their respective institutions (Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC), Greenbelt MD; and Ames Research Center (ARC), Moffett Field CA) to celebrate the successful launch and capture of both satellites into lunar orbit. These events were widely attended by the public (700 at GSFC and 1300 at ARC), indicating a desire for a large-scale public event focused on lunar content [1].

With that in mind, in December of 2009, members of the lunar EPO community decided to create an annual, nation-wide event that engaged members of the public in making observations of the Moon called “National Observe the Moon Night” [1]. Because of the efforts already achieved by the International Year of Astronomy (IYA), international interest in the event grew rapidly, and “National Observe the Moon Night” quickly grew into “International Observe the Moon Night (InOMN).” The first annual InOMN was held on September 18, 2010 with the theme “Seeing the Moon in a Whole New Light”.

InOMN 2011: What Does the Moon Mean to You? The InOMN theme for 2011 focused on the cultural and personal connections to the Moon, and asked participants to share their stories about the Moon via an art contest. People from around the world shared their stories through Flickr, Facebook, Youtube, and the 2011 Art Contest. Winners of the Art Contest received custom pendants from Surlyramics.

InOMN Partnerships. Strategic partnerships that were developed with national and international organi-

zations in 2010 were maintained, thus ensuring continuity in the dissemination plan. In the US, the InOMN CC consists of leaders in the NASA lunar EPO community (including the NASA Lunar Science Institute - NLSI, and the LRO, LCROSS, and Lunar Quest EPO Teams); the Lunar and Planetary Institute; the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP); MoonZoo; and the ASP’s affiliate Night Sky Network. International partners include Universe Awareness, the Canadian Collaborative of the NASA Lunar Science Institute, and the Institute for Astrophysics (Italy).



Figure 1: 2011 InOMN Art Contest entry, taken with an iPhone through a telescope.

InOMN 2011 Outcomes: On 08 October, 2011, more than 115,000 people participated in 627 events in 57 countries around the world [1]. These numbers represent a **25% increase in the number of events held from 2010**. Over 300 of these were held in the United States. We estimate that over 600,000 people have participated in an InOMN event to date. A majority of InOMN hosts reported between 11 and 50 participants (90 out of 160 reports), although several report their number of participants in the thousands. The average number of participants per event were 183.



Figure 2: Locations of 2011 InOMN events. Red bubbles indicate event locations, while blue “t”s indicate event locations that held tweet-ups. A total of 627 events were held in 57 countries around the world.

Science Representation in InOMN. Events held by the InOMN CC (Greenbelt, MD; Houston, TX; Huntsville, AL; Moffett Field, CA) included participation from local scientists. Scientists served as volunteers for hands-on activities, guest lecturers, and as local resources at “Chat with a scientist” tables. The 2011 Moon Maps, which were handed out at our events, featured images and data from the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter. Science presentations and Moon Maps were made available for download on the InOMN website (<http://observethemoonnight.org>). Evaluation results from 2010 reveal that 68% of InOMN hosts used information provided on the website [1,2], which indicates that lunar science is reaching InOMN audiences across the globe.

Conclusions. The 25% increase from 2010 to 2011 in the number of InOMN events demonstrates a continued international interest in the Moon. This interest represents a large potential for infusing cutting edge lunar science and exploration into an event that has already reached hundreds of thousands of people. We encourage scientists and engineers to participate in InOMN in 2012, whether through a physical presence at an event, or through electronic contributions on the observethemoonnight.org website. Dates for InOMN in 2012 will be voted on by the public in late February.

References:

[1] Hsu B.C. et al. (2011) *2011 LPSC. Abstract 1193*. [2] Hsu B.C. et al. (2011) *AGU Fall Mtg., Abstract #ED33A-0763*.