

MyMoon: Crossroads of Social Media and Lunar Science Exploration. A. J. Shaner¹, C. Shupla¹, S. Shipp¹, A. Eriksson¹, ¹Lunar and Planetary Institute, 3600 Bay Area Boulevard, Houston, TX 77565, shaner@lpi.usra.edu

Introduction: NASA's new scientific exploration of the Moon, coupled with the public's interest in the Moon and innovative social networking approaches, is being leveraged to engage a fresh adult audience in lunar science and exploration. In July 2009 the Lunar and Planetary Institute (LPI) launched a lunar education new media portal, MyMoon. LPI is collaborating with lunar scientists, educators, artists – and the public – to populate the site with science content, diverse media exhibits, events, and opportunities for involvement. Through MyMoon, the general public interacts with lunar content that informs them about lunar science research and missions, and engages them in future plans for lunar exploration and eventual habitation.

Objectives: MyMoon's objectives are to: 1) Develop a dynamic, social media learning portal that will engage the general public in lunar science and exploration, with a focus on adults ages 18-35 (an audience primarily not engaged in lunar science), 2) Host a growing audience of lunar enthusiasts that becomes involved in NASA's lunar exploration by sharing their ideas about lunar topics, creating their own materials, and participating in events and experiences, and 3) Create a model for online engagement of audiences 18 to 35 years old, and provide detailed evaluation data about best practices and strategies for success.

New Media: Immersive new media technologies are changing the way that people interact, work, learn, and teach. These provide potentially high-impact opportunities for reaching an audience of young adults, age 18 to 35, that largely is not accessed by, or accessing, NASA [1]. This intended audience responds well to content delivered in an abbreviated, clever, and irreverent manner. MyMoon delivers lunar content in such a style through news updates and guest blogs. This same audience also wants to be part of the conversation. To facilitate this, MyMoon blogs offer users the chance to explore topics further and allows users to leave their own comments.

Social Media: MyMoon strives to engage – and involve – the intended audience to build a community of enthusiasts for lunar scientific exploration through social media platforms. Users are invited to post videos on YouTube and participate in photo and art contests on Flickr. MyMoon utilizes Facebook and Twitter to share events and contests. MyMoon also features interactive exhibits that are audience driven and are added on a quarterly basis. Current exhibits highlight Galileo Galilei and World Tales of the Moon. Contests encourage audience involvement. Contests have in-

cluded creating lunar haikus and submissions for LCROSS's Last Words. Semi-monthly webcasts allow audience members to interact directly with lunar scientists, authors, and artists. Webcasts guests have included LCROSS scientists, a space exploration historian and author, a Native American storyteller, and the Poet Laureate of South Carolina. Highlights of webcasts are posted on YouTube. MyMoon will also host "People Pages" where users will be able to post pictures and information about themselves.

Evaluation: Evaluation is critical to the success of MyMoon and is obtained through visitor feedback. In addition, focus group interviews have been conducted and will continue to be scheduled as needed. Preliminary evaluation data revealed the biggest challenge facing MyMoon was marketing to the target audience. Numerous marketing approaches are being tested and evaluated to further reach the target audience. Year one evaluation is currently being collected. These data will reveal more information regarding user demographics, overall impressions of the website, and user participation in various MyMoon experiences.

References:

[1] Dittmar, M. (2004) "The Market Study for Space Exploration."

Additional Information: If you have any questions or need additional information regarding MyMoon, please contact Andy Shaner at shaner@lpi.usra.edu or 281-486-2163. Visit the MyMoon website at <http://mymoon.lpi.usra.edu>