PLANETARY LAKE LANDER: AN ONLINE E/PO CAMPAIGN USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO ADDRESS THE GENERAL PUBLIC. E. W. Smith¹, N. A. Cabrol², T. M. Smith³, E. A. Grin⁴, S. Lee⁵, R. Lorenz⁶, J. Moersch⁷, E. MacLennan⁸, V. Parro⁹, L. Pedersen¹, P. Sobron¹, C. Tambley¹, C. Thompson¹, D. S. Wettergreen¹, SETI Institute Carl Sagan Center, 189 Bernardo Ave., Suite 100, Mountain View, CA 94043; NASA Ames Space Science Division, MS 245-3, Moffett Field, CA 94035. ²Aqua Survey Inc., Flemington, NJ 08822; Email: smith@aquasurvey.com; NASA Ames Intelligent Robotics Group; ⁴Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab., MD, 20723-6999; ⁵University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996; ⁶Centro de Astrobiología, Madrid, Spain; ⁷Campoalto Operaciones, Santiago, Chile; ⁸University of Guelph, ON N1G 2W1, Canada; ¹⁰Carnegie Mellon University Robotics Institute, Pittsburgh, PA, 15260.

Introduction: While the importance and difficulty of raising public awareness of scientific exploration is well understood, the possibility for projects to do effective Education and Public Outreach (E/PO) is often dictated by their ability to use online communication and social media tools effectively [1].

Although some projects have achieved great success in terms of numbers of people reached, those with limited time to support E/PO have to make choices about how much resources to direct, and where. The number of social media tools can seem overwhelming, and E/PO activity without measurable results inefficient [2].

The multidisciplinary Planetary Lake Lander Project [3] undertook a new web-based social media E/PO campaign to share their 2013 field season and monitor the results of its outreach effort.

Background and Objectives: The Planetary Lake Lander (PLL) Project is developing and testing technology relevant to Titan’s exploration while investigating the impact of deglaciation and climate change on past and present planetary lakes. The multidisciplinarity of PLL can make it complex to explain to the casual reader. Within the resources of the project, it was thus decided before departure to the field to focus the efforts on a template-type website and on the strong areas of the project, i.e., visual communication, as well as to rely on all participating scientists, engineers, and logistical team members on using their institutional and personal contacts to spread the word.

Rather than go into great details on the science, or attempting to provide in depth data, the team focused instead on short, uncomplicated and visually driven messages, with later links to more in-depth information.

Social Media Activities: Just days before the beginning of the field season, the PlanetaryLakeLander domain name was purchased and a website designed using the free template program Weebly, which includes a blog page. A pre existing 26-slide overview of the project was incorporated into the website as a slideshow, and the blog page was populated with links to pre existing articles, web pages, and videos relevant to the PLL Project. A gmail email account was created with an associated YouTube Channel. Google Analytics account was established to track visits and impact.

In The Field. While at the PLL base camp, emphasis was placed on photography, video, and written short explanations on the various science and technology
aspects of the project. Blog posts accompanied the photos, and uploaded via satellite connection. Short videos were made to document the important themes, see: [http://www.planetarylakelander.com/videos.html](http://www.planetarylakelander.com/videos.html).

Limited bandwidth constrained the team’s ability to download the videos at the time of the field campaign, and the site continues to be currently updated.

PLL’s outreach was completed by visits from the media, both written (Scientific American, see [http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=titans-seas-get-an-earthly-stand-in-as-robot-explores-chilean-lake](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=titans-seas-get-an-earthly-stand-in-as-robot-explores-chilean-lake)), and by the Chilean TV, who completed a 30-minute documentary entitled “Chile: Natural Laboratory” with the PLL project (to be aired in January 2014).

Posts and videos continue to be currently shared with related websites, such as Facebook Planetary Landscapes managed by the PLL PI (see [https://www.facebook.com/PlanetaryLandscapes](https://www.facebook.com/PlanetaryLandscapes)) as well as Sea Reasearch and Recovery.

**Conclusions:** Two weeks after the end of the expedition, the 6 short videos currently posted to the PLL YouTube Channel have been viewed over 1,200 times. The Scientific American Article drove further traffic to all sites, including 20,624 views, 1,195 likes, and 222 shares on Planetary Landscapes alone at the time of this writing. The PLL website will be continuously updated in the coming weeks with new videos, texts, and other materials as well.

Overall, this experience shows that online E/PO efforts through social media tools may have significant impact without being overwhelming for a project. However, the effort needs to be focused and thought-through beforehand. Participation of project members in the distribution through their pre-existing contacts can help search engine optimization of a new site considerably.

**References:**


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