Twenty Years of The Moon Station: Toward the Next 20 Years
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What is The Moon Station?

The Moon Station, in Japanese “月探査情報ステーション” is a website to promote domestic and worldwide lunar and planetary exploration by publishing their latest information and comprehensive commentary. It is one of the largest website in this category in Japan.

Established on November 2, 1998, we successfully commemorated 20th anniversary last year. Currently, the website holds 4,709 pages archived through 20 years’ activity.

Access trend and insight

Thanks to the renewal of 2016 from the bottom of the system, we can now monitor access statistics via the Google Analytics, far more intelligible and detailed analysis than conventional log data processing.

The number of pageviews are in increasing trend mainly due to introduction of mobile-friendly page design.

However, we also regard high bounce rate (approx. 80%) and low session duration (<1min). This is our challenge to improve user experience and eventually Ad revenue.

Figure: brief summary of user attribute analysis by Google Analytics since January 2018 to February 2019. More detailed analysis can be obtained from main console of Google Analytics.

Toward the next 20 years

We believe that the core value of our website is a balance of comprehensiveness and professionalism. This value is universal and essential in public outreach / engagement.

Also, monetizing of contents are important to become self-sustaining the website. Currently, we are relying a lot on funding from various supporting companies, and seeking the combination of revenue and contents through daily website operation and analysis.

There will be more international lunar and planetary missions involved in Japan such as Deep Space Gateway (LOP-G) and MMX (Martian Moons Exploration) in 2020s. The information transmission in English, in turn, will be important and we are now under assessment of English version of our website. We really noticed very few information on current Japanese lunar and planetary exploration in English and other languages.

Such a mutual information interchange will help Japanese (and worldwide) citizens learn about lunar and planetary missions as their own matter, and ultimately will bring peoples unite beyond the borders by such missions. In the next 20 years, we will continue the challenge for the new scheme, new field of outreach / engagement based on our 20 years experience.

The characteristic

The website has very unique characteristic compared to other similar website. Our site is operated, written and managed by lunar and planetary scientists and engineers directly involved in the exploration.

Also, the website also helps to overcome “language barrier” for Japanese people when obtaining information of lunar and planetary exploration. Very precise and easy-to-understand articles have good reputation among people, particularly newpsersons and teachers.

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1) The University of Aizu / Moon and Planets, LLC
2) National Astronomical Observatory of Japan
3) Institute of Space and Astronautical Science, JAXA
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Date | Events
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Nov 2, 1998 | Establishment. Started as the promotion site of Japanese lunar exploration, SELENE (later Kaguya)
Nov, 2000 | Re-designed and renewed as the permanent website.
Jul, 2003 | Published the contents for Mars and Mars exploration, entering the step for planetary exploration.
Jan, 2004 | Semi-real-time live coverage of the landing of Mars Exploration Rovers. The website attracted more than 1 million access (nearly 100 thousand paveiwes)
Sep, 2006 | Website operation suspended for three months.
Apr, 2010 | Domain name changed to moonstation.jp.
Sep, 2013 | The site recorded 2.35 millions hits (287 thousand pageviews) due to high ranking of Google Search for Autumn Moon Viewing.
Mar, 2016 | Total re-designing and renewing for the first time in 13 years.
Nov, 2016 | The LLC established.

An article of The Asahi Shim bun (Feb 22, 2018) describing future manned lunar mission and Japanese lunar exploration. One of the author (Terazono) with the name of the website appears in this article.