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Hitchhiking to the Moon (8)

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A STANDARD DEVICE FOR CHILDREN'S LANDED PAYLOADS

**Abstract**

Several robotic landers are expected to reach the lunar surface during the next few years. In this paper we describe and advocate an auxiliary payload concept building upon the successful experience of The Planetary Society in providing such items for previous planetary missions. The main ideas are, first, to establish a simple standard interface applicable to any lander and second, to engage the creativity of children worldwide. The concept is similar to that of cubesats and the cubesat-delivering P-Pod but the container is much smaller, perhaps a cylinder 2 to 3 cm in diameter and 10 to 15 cm long. This standard cylinder would have a spring ejection device to launch its contents out onto the lunar surface where the resulting object would rest in the field of view of a lander camera. Launch would be triggered by a pull wire activated by movement of lander parts at touchdown. The contents would be the subject of a world contest open to children up to the age of 12, with rules and management by The Planetary Society, as was done for example in naming the martian rovers Spirit and Opportunity. Designs would be evaluated for originality and effectiveness in conveying artistic and historic ideas through the emplacement of expanding objects, probably brightly colored and attractively shaped, to contrast with their dull grey lunar surroundings.