

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)  
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SPACE TWEETUP – FROM A PARTICIPANT TO A MARS TWEETUP ORGANISATOR AND A  
NEW FORMAT OF SPACE COMMUNICATION**Abstract**

A Tweetup is an informal gathering of people using the microblogging and social media platform Twitter. When space enthusiasts who are using Twitter come together it is called a SpaceTweetup. Since 2009, NASA is regularly organizing NasaTweetups to give these people a unique opportunity like watching a space shuttle launch or meeting astronauts. In September 2011, the European Space Agency (ESA) and the German Space Agency (DLR) organized the first European SpaceTweetup during the German Aerospace day. The author had the chance to be one of 60 participants at this SpaceTweetup in Cologne and experienced the concept of a Tweetup and the engagement of the participants from the inside view. Motivated by this experience, the author was organizing a MarsTweetup during the “Dachstein Mars simulation” in April 2012. Between 27.April - 01.May 2012, a five day Mars simulation was conducted by the Austrian Space Forum and international research partners at the Mammoth cave and the Giant Ice cave at the Dachstein region in Austria. During this field test, the most advanced version of the Aouda.X spacesuit simulator and selected geophysical and life-science related experiments were tested. In this paper we outline the potential and limitations of social media and how to engage the general public to participate and communicate about space projects through their own experience. We show examples of material SpaceTweetup participants produce e.g. hundreds of tweets during the actual event, blog entries, photo galleries and how space communication can benefit from it. Our considerations on organising a SpaceTweetup are complemented with a section on lessons learned, logistics and legal aspects.