

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Space Network: Social Media and Digital Resources (9)

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: A NEW ERA OF ADVERTISING FOR GOVERNMENT SPACE
AGENCIES

Abstract

Increasing scrutiny on government spending, coupled with a rise in expectations of government transparency, poses a unique challenge for space agencies that aspire to responsibly inform and inspire their stakeholders. Traditional, or targeted, advertising is an expensive endeavor; one estimate places the U.S. government's advertising expenditures at \$16 billion over the last decade. This price tag comes with significant benefits, however. Demographic targeting can result in a trickle-up effect that could lead to political support through constituent advocacy. Nontraditional, or subscribed, advertising requires little funding beyond overhead, but requires organic growth through innovative cross-promotion to reach an uninformed audience. Historically, U.S. Federal agencies have leveraged traditional media – TV, print, and radio – to promote public health and public service; to recruit talent for national defense; and generate awareness for environmental causes. The era of mobile devices and constant connectivity has spurred the rise of nontraditional engagement, or social media, has become an increasingly vital tool for government agencies in the past five years. NASA upheld its position early as an innovative agency, quickly embracing Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, and YouTube, among others, and has since engaged in cooperative agreements with several social media outlets to increase the agency's branding capacity online. The balance between responsible spending and a commitment to informing and inspiring a stakeholder base is not yet clear. This paper investigates precedence and practices in space agency advertising, identifies models of success and failure, and ponders the role of oversight in the absence of clear policies on government advertising.