

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Innovative and Informal Space Education (4)

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TRANSPARENCY, PARTICIPATION, AND COLLABORATION FOR SPACE

Abstract

NASA's work in social networking is diverse. NASA spacecraft and personnel connect with their communities FaceBook and MySpace, tweet on Twitter, upload to YouTube and iTunes, and host exploration events in Second Life. All of this is based on the need to identify and support alternative education opportunities with non-traditional audiences. Amongst these varied activities, NASA's work in virtual worlds holds at its heart the very promise of a true virtual world—to be able to walk on another planet without leaving this one. NASA is active in several immersive synthetic environments, both in the gaming realm and in virtual worlds, and this case study will focus on both the strategic directions as well as implementation choices and results we are seeing from our work in this area. Of particular emphasis will be the mature regions we have built out in Second Life, both in collaboration with others and for our own internal engineering needs. NASA's focus here is four fold:

1. Mission support and collaboration (modeling and simulation, international collaboration, team support)
2. Outreach and citizen participation
3. Training
4. Education (Teen and adult grids in SL) for interactive and immersive learning for students and teachers

NASA is committed to realizing the promise of virtual worlds and of allowing space exploration to any one. This paper will highlight the work in virtual worlds and discuss briefly NASA's other forays into social networking.