

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Education Outreach (3)

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INSTANT ACCESS: THE UNCOMMON UNION OF NEW MEDIA & SPACEFLIGHT

Abstract

Traditional media is dying. New media is on the rise. It is an undeniable fact that we live in an era of rapid communications technology development. Social networking technologies that affect the way that we communicate are swiftly penetrating our daily life. Tools such as Twitter, FaceBook, and YouTube enable the average person to communicate instantaneously with a global audience. So what influence does this wave of new media have on the space community? How can FaceBook help advance the cause of commercial space transportation? What does Twitter have to do with the International Space Station? This paper will explore how this new interactive media is currently affecting the space community and its potential for education, outreach, marketing, and even technical collaboration - all from the convenience of your laptop or phone.

Unlike traditional media, new media goes beyond delivering the news. It encourages and facilitates interactive participation. Users have the opportunity to comment on, rate, or redistribute the information. They can be involved. Further, anyone can do it. Students, political candidates, government officials, regulators, astronauts, rocket builders, teachers, and even mission controllers now have instant access to a limitless audience.

To understand the effects of new media on the space community, one must first understand terms like “social networking” and “social media” and distinguish between traditional media and new media. Further, the technologies themselves must be explained in fundamental terms for the non-user. A snapshot of selected examples is provided to aid this explanation.

The relevance of this technology to the space industry is crucial. “What role does (or could) new media play in the space sector? How can this new style of communication further the cause of space?” Answers will be provided by exploring the efficacy of new media as mechanisms for space outreach; education; marketing; and technical exchange. These ideas will then be substantiated with specific examples from the Federal Aviation Administration’s Office of Commercial Space Transportation, NASA, and various private space companies.

Finally, recommendations will be made for the reader to apply what they have learned. As individual space enthusiasts utilize the interactive tools of the day, they are empowered to freely and effectively exchange ideas beyond national borders. This encourages a spirit of international cooperation that could help promote the successful and peaceful advancement of space for years to come.