

SPACE EXPLORATION SYMPOSIUM (A3)  
Space Exploration Overview (1)

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## GOOGLE LUNAR X PRIZE: A COMMERCIAL LUNAR VENTURE

**Abstract**

In the past two centuries, with the majority of the surface of our planet already explored, civilizations around the globe have striven to expand the sphere of human economic influence upward. This trend began with the first skyscrapers of the 1880 and has continued through the birth of commercial aviation and commercial satellites, each of which drives hundreds of millions of US Dollars in annual economy, as well as infrastructure vital to the modern way of life. Although some contend that with geostationary satellites in orbit 36,000 km above sea level our economic sphere has reached its maximum state, there exist compelling reasons to believe this is not the case, and in the near future—rather than science fiction inspired dream—we will see commercial activities expanding out into cis-lunar space and beyond. The Google Lunar X PRIZE is a great example of the emerging area of commercial space exploration. It was announced in September of 2007, offers a total of US\$30 Million in prizes to the first privately funded teams to successfully explore the surface of the Moon with a robotic spacecraft. This completion has now 29 teams, headquarter in 17 nations to put forth an effort at a commercial lunar venture. This paper will examine the current status, challenges and history of the biggest international commercial venture. The Google Lunar X PRIZE