

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

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CULTIVATING A MULTICULTURAL ONLINE AUDIENCE: A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS  
OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR YURI'S NIGHT**Abstract**

Yuri's Night, "The World Space Party," is a human spaceflight advocacy initiative embodied in an annual global celebration and exploration of the history, present, and future of human spaceflight. Since 2001, Yuri's Night events have been celebrated around April 12, the date of the first human spaceflight, that of Yuri Gagarin in 1961, and the first launch of the Space Shuttle in 1981. Over 2,000 independently organized Yuri's Night events have been held across all seven continents, in virtual reality, and aboard the International Space Station. Attendance figures have ranged from over 12,000 people at a two-day space festival to small groups of friends at star gazing events. Individual event organizers come from a plethora of backgrounds and cultures as do the attendees at events. The overall success of Yuri's Night as a concept is dependent on reaching beyond audiences in the science and aerospace fields. Connecting with groups in the arts, music, cultural, and educational fields are critical to creating a global phenomenon that transcends ethnicities and borders. This study explores the utilization of various social media tools to facilitate the distributed, decentralized organization of these events through three means of analysis: number and frequency of posts, types of posts being made, and responses to the posts by the public. Post coding by type includes both the media used (e.g. text, image, video, or hyperlink) as well as the content style (general space information, Yuri's Night specific information, or encouraging action). Feedback is measured through a variety of means, including but not limited to: comments left by respondents, "likes" on Facebook, thumbs up/thumbs down on YouTube, and other available metrics. In addition to Facebook, Yuri's Night extends its reach with Twitter and Google+ to maximize an eclectic social media spread that mirrors its audience. By analyzing postings and responses from October 2009 through May 2013, this study specifically explores the ability of the Yuri's Night Global Executive Team to engage the public over the course of a four year period.