

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Open Space: Participatory Space Education and Outreach (8)

Author: Ms. Kathryn Robison
Youngstown State University, United States, katrobison@gmail.com

Ms. L.K. Tamanini
United States, craftlass@gmail.com

HASHTAG FOR OUTREACH

Abstract

This paper will examine the use of hashtags on social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook as a tool for participatory outreach in space education. It will build on previous research done by the author in the area of hashtags as specialized discursive tools within the discourse community of SpaceTweeps (a community of space enthusiasts on Twitter). It will explore how SpaceTweeps have designed and used hashtags targeted at engaging a wider audience (specifically non-SpaceTweeps) in considering the value of space and space exploration. This paper will look at both SpaceTweep originated hashtags such as #ThingsNASAmightTweet and #WhatNASAisFor, as well as space agency originated hashtags like the recent #RealGravity hashtag promoted by NASA social media alongside the 2014 Oscars and the film Gravity. This paper will discuss the usefulness and the impact of these hashtags as well as their limitations. It will investigate whether or not these hashtags are successful at targeting a wider audience and therefore capitalizing on social media trends. Finally, this paper will also consider whether or not the impacts of these hashtags are translating into a wider engagement of the topics of space, space exploration and space policy among the general public.