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SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)  
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Author: Dr. Ryan L. Kobrick  
Yuri's Night, United States, ryan@yurisnight.net

Dr. Alan Steinberg  
Rice University, United States, alanfsteinberg@gmail.com

Mr. Jeffrey W. Alles  
Yuri's Night, United States, jeffrey@yurisnight.net

Mr. Remco Timmermans  
Nederlandse Vereniging voor Ruimtevaart (NVR), The Netherlands,  
remco.timmermans@community.isunet.edu

ANALYSIS OF SPACE SOCIAL EVENT ATTENDANCE AND MAXIMIZING EFFECTIVENESS

**Abstract**

Despite a large number of advancements and significant achievements since the booming Apollo era of spaceflight, mainstream public interest in space exploration has not consistently grown with these milestones. While it is not yet clear why this is so, many organizations have taken action to attempt to raise awareness of space exploration on levels ranging from local to global. One way organizations have done this is through innovative and nontraditional educational and public outreach space social events, whereby people come together for an experience that highlights space achievements. These events come in a variety of forms ranging from government sponsored NASA Socials focused on promotion of the agency's activities, to Yuri's Night parties focused on celebrating human spaceflight every April 12th, and to the more broad and comprehensive global activities with World Space Week every October 4-10. The goals of these events is ultimately similar, to expand the public's awareness of the space sector as a whole. The question for many organizations is how to maximize the effectiveness of these events. In order to answer this question, this study surveys individuals interested, and aware of, space social events in order to gain more insight on: who attends; the motivations behind attendance; what content participants want; and the value to attendees. Additionally, outreach by organizers and participants before, during, and post event will be highlighted, and other factors that contribute to a widespread footprint to the external public will be examined. This study is a systematic attempt to identify those most likely to attend space social events and to understand what can be done to increase their likelihood of attendance. The results of the study allow for recommendations to individuals and organizations responsible for or considering space social events on how to maximize attendance and catalyze interest in space exploration. This research may also be paramount for organizations with similar niche industries advocating in relatively esoteric fields reaching for the mainstream, where generating enthusiasm and engagement may be an obstacle.