

51st IAA HISTORY OF ASTRONAUTICS SYMPOSIUM (E4)

“Can you believe they put a man on the Moon?” (3B)

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University of Mississippi, United StatesTHE CULTURAL IMPACT OF THE APOLLO MISSIONS AND THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL
HERITAGE ON THE MOON**Abstract**

The landing of humans on the Moon forever changed the perception of what humanity can ultimately achieve. A look at the now obsolete technology used to transport people not only to the Moon, but then safely back to Earth, demonstrates both the impressiveness of the feat and extent to which our technology has improved. Remnants of this technology and achievement still remain at landing sites on the Moon, ranging from intact rovers to tracks and waste left behind.

This paper first addresses the cultural significance of the Apollo missions, not only for Americans, but for humanity as a whole. Cultural heritage sites can be defined as “works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.” It can certainly be argued that the Apollo landing sites are of outstanding universal value from at least a historical point of view.

Given this fact, the second and larger focus of this paper rests in the arena of legal and policy opportunities and challenges presented in the protection of that cultural heritage on the Moon. Opportunities for protecting these sites and the objects left behind by the Apollo missions are assessed under international space law (primarily the Outer Space Treaty) and international cultural heritage law, including both treaty-based and customary law. Comparison is made to underwater cultural heritage in international waters, including the RMS Titanic, and to sites of historical value in Antarctica. Non-binding instruments and policies are analyzed, including the concept of “Keep Out Zones” in space and the NASA Recommendations to Space-Faring Entities: How to Protect and Preserve the Historic and Scientific Value of U.S. Government Lunar Artifacts. Though there is not a clear hard law framework currently in place to protect these sites, it is possible for States to leverage existing agreements to assist in the protection of these sites. It is necessary to raise awareness of this concern before damage is done to these singular indicators of mankind’s achievement by new actors, be they government agencies or private entities.