

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Calling Planet Earth - Space Outreach to the General Public (6)

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PUBLIC INTEREST TRENDS IN CURRENT SPACE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AREAS

Abstract

Reaching Space Science is a space science and technology communication platform that is aimed for the general public. Many are intimidated by the term "rocket science" and thus perceive the industry's findings, science, and advances as being incomprehensible or beyond public understanding. The space industry's activities effectively combine various fields of scientific research, dispenses vast amount of public funds, and produces findings that can have profound effects on human knowledge. To communicate these important developments, *Reaching Space Science* was founded in 2017 to interpret the technical and scientific topics of the industry for public comprehension, value, and sharing through informal education via website publications and social media engagements. The project has developed a social media following in the thousands and is avidly shared and viewed by leading industry representatives and the general public alike. This paper first provides a historical review of the public's relationship with the space industry's findings and advancements, including both understanding and interest. A thorough analysis of *Reaching Space Science's* social media and web analytics results is subsequently provided to suggest possible trends of public interest in particular space and industry topics. Trends are deduced according to specific domains within the space industry, in addition to both geographic and demographic correlations. These results are used to suggest what areas of the space industry are of greatest public interest, and what themes are most commonly misinterpreted and/or poorly understood. This initiative also highlights what successful branding and public engagement mechanisms have proven successful on a minimal budget. Insights into the future of the public's interest and understanding of upcoming advancements in the sector are also discussed. These discussions deliver a series of recommendations for public outreach strategy development for the coming decade of space industry activities.