

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
New Worlds - Non-Traditional Space Education and Outreach (7)

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LANGUAGE CARDS FOR NASA'S JAMES WEBB SPACE TELESCOPE

Abstract

The James Webb Space Telescope will be the world's premier space science observatory when it launches in 2021. Webb will solve mysteries of our solar system, look beyond to distant worlds around other stars, and probe the mysterious structures and origins of our universe and our place in it.

Webb is an international collaboration between NASA, the European Space Agency (ESA), and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA). In an effort to connect Webb to all people, the Webb Outreach Team has designed, compiled, and published the top seven facts about Webb into 40 different languages, called 'Language Cards,' over the past two years. The Webb team started by consulting friends and colleagues who were fluent to help with translations for the initial set of cards. Once the cards were introduced on social media, the team started getting offers for more translations. Now, when the team posts an update of new languages on social media, they will ask native speakers to submit translations for missing languages, and so the collection grows. An incredibly time-consuming process, Webb team members gather submissions, format the languages into a template, check the translations, then post the individual language cards online and print hardcopies for outreach events.

These translated language cards connect Webb to a worldwide audience of billions of people. In addition to posting online and via social media streams, the language card translations were used at multiple in-person outreach events to connect diverse audiences to Webb via hardcopies and digital copies on a tablet. For instance, at an outreach event in New York City in September 2018, the Webb team held a three-day exhibit that connected them to visitors from 30 different countries and the language cards were by far the most impactful method of communication and understanding. Through experience at outreach events, the team learned that having a digital tablet with all the different versions easily accessible worked much better than shuffling through multiple hardcopies of different languages. The digital tablet also helps display video of the Webb top facts translated into American Sign Language, connecting Webb to the deaf community.

A non-traditional outreach product for NASA, the language cards have been very successful in connecting the Webb mission to an international audience, sharing the details and importance of the mission, and overcoming language barriers.