

IAU and the Public: IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach Communications

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Abstract. The IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach (IAU OAO) communications comprehend a set of ongoing tasks that contribute to the IAU direct interaction with the public. Its primary goal is to support the current outreach activities around the world by disseminating, promoting and encouraging outreach-related activities from and to the IAU. Examples of these tasks are managing the IAU Public Enquiries and FAQs, the IAU Social Media, the IAU Astronomy Outreach Newsletter, and the IAU Themes. The IAU OAO utilizes a set of digital platforms and their data analysis tools to manage the content and community response. How data is gathered from the different tools available, the importance of indicators and their subsequent analysis, are steps considered for each of these channels in order to maximize our audience reach, influencing the overall communications strategy of an organization such as the IAU.

Keywords. outreach, astronomy communication, online tools.

1. Introduction

The IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach (IAU OAO) currently manages several IAU-related communications channels such as the IAU Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs); the IAU Themes; the IAU Social Media; the IAU Astronomy Outreach Newsletter and the IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach Social Media.

2. Overview and Outcomes

IAU Themes and FAQs. The IAU OAO is in charge of answering public enquiries for IAU-related affairs, via email and IAU Social Media channels (Facebook and Twitter), thus allowing the IAU to build a dedicated dialogue with the public by using direct channels such as emailing, messaging, commenting, tweeting or retweeting. The IAU Themes featured on the IAU website, encompass the most popular topics related to astronomy and the IAU, triggered by the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) that the IAU has received over the years through the different channels. They comprise the most visited iau.org pages (with nearly 100 000 views per month in total) and highlight the role of IAU and its scientific bodies. The monitoring is done mostly by using Google Analytics in iau.org domain. With this monitoring tool we identify the pages that attract the majority of our viewers and the relations between social media campaigns and traffic increase, and subsequent fluctuations in access.

IAU Social Media. The IAU Social Media intends to promote public awareness of the IAU activities by sharing upcoming IAU conferences and symposia, information about the IAU Scientific Bodies activities, and updates from the IAU Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD), the IAU Office for Young Astronomers (OYA) and the IAU OAO. The IAU is currently active on Facebook and Twitter engaging nearly 15 000 followers around the world combined and intends to promote awareness of the IAU activities and its visibility near our target audience, the general public. As monitoring tools we use mostly Twitter Analytics and Facebook Insights, our focus being mostly on geographical distribution, and followers interactions with the content provided. These tools prove valuable for us to tailor future content and shape the campaigns providing our community with maximum content of interest.

IAU Astronomy Outreach Newsletter. The IAU Astronomy Outreach Newsletter is a community generated digital publication curated by the IAU OAO team to improve community building and disseminate commendable efforts, such as astronomy outreach and education activities and resources around the world. Our content focus on groups:

- . Organizing large-scale events at a regional or international level;
- . Offering astronomy education or communication job positions;
- . Creating innovative projects or inspiring stories;
- . Looking for professionalamateur collaborations in astronomy;
- . Creating any educational resources or activities.

The newsletter is issued twice a month and translated into five languages English, Japanese, Spanish, Galician and Serbian, popular contributions highlight national quality outreach and education activities to the international community. It has a reach of 5000 outreach and educational subscribers in nearly 60 different countries. To monitor our reach within our community of subscribers we use MailChimp, with a focus on optimization of release time/date and level of engagement with the content (e.g. click rate, popular links, etc.).

IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach Social Media. The IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach Facebook page started in June 2017. From September 2017 on-wards, our team implemented a new social media campaign, in which the team dedicates a full week to each country and its National Outreach Coordinator (NOC). Following our IAU guidelines for communication, our goal is to (1) promote existing worthy national activities, (2) raise international awareness for the continuous outreach efforts done at a local/national level and (3) to increase the visibility of the NOCs activities and the NOC network. During this week the NOCs can:

- (1) Highlight their work and their institution's activities;
- (2) Highlight worthy national events or activities in astronomy outreach and education;
- (3) Promote astronomy clubs or organizations active in the country.

One year after the launch, our fan base on Facebook is now of nearly 2200 people and we use mostly Facebook Insights to monitor our reach during a particular week increase the number of followers in a particular region, depending on the country featured, etc. Here the networks from our NOCs play a huge role and help us to understand the national / regional visibility and reach of our activities.

References

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