Introducing “The MOOSE,” the Menu of Outreach Opportunities for Science Education

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Abstract. The Astronomical Society of the Pacific has been working with the American Astronomical Society to develop a new program of outreach training called “AAS Astronomy Ambassadors.” We describe a key on-line resource from this project, which is now freely available for everyone doing astronomy education and outreach at http://aas.org/outreach/moose.

1. Introduction to Ambassadors

The AAS Astronomy Ambassadors program, developed jointly by the AAS and the ASP, consists of a two-day workshop and an on-line community. The goal is to train and support professional astronomers who are still in the early stages of their careers in doing more and more effective school and public outreach (see, for example, Fraknoi, et al. 2014).

At the introductory workshop, held just before an astronomy conference, such as the AAS winter meeting or the Division for Planetary Sciences fall meeting, participants are introduced to a wide range of published and on-line materials that can help them plan and do their local outreach programs. Among these is a new resource, developed by the present author specifically for the Ambassadors project called The MOOSE.

2. Contents of the MOOSE

The MOOSE contains three sections of resources to introduce the outreach novice to project, organizations, and materials that can be helpful in outreach. Here is its table of contents:

I. How to Be an Astronomy Ambassador
   A. Outreach Training Programs at Other Scientific Organizations
   B. A Few Projects Already Being Done by Young Astronomers
   C. General Presentation Techniques for Outreach
   D. Miscellaneous Sites Useful for Outreach

II. Where to Be an Astronomy Ambassador
   A. Types of Places & Finding Aids for Each Type
   B. Education Pages at Astronomy Organizations

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C. Examples of Outreach Options at Specific Astronomy Departments

III. What to Do as an Astronomy Ambassador
A. Where to Find Good Astronomy Activities
B. Sites Where Public Astronomy Questions Are Answered
C. A Few Selected Sites for Finding Good Astronomical Images
D. Some Key Resources to Read about Astronomy Education and Public Outreach
E. How to Evaluate Educational Programs

As an example of the kinds of practical items that are in the MOOSE, we might just point to Section IIA, which contains a “finding aid” for organizations to contact in your community if you want to help them with astronomy or space science outreach. Among the kinds of organizations this section has websites to find are: schools, community colleges, planetaria, science museums, nature centers, science cafes, science festivals, youth groups, national and state parks, summer camps, amateur astronomy clubs, after-school programs, service clubs (such as Rotary or Lions), and public libraries.

3. Finding and Updating the MOOSE

At first, while the MOOSE was in development, it was an internal document for the program participants only. But now that it has been tested and updated with two cohorts of Ambassadors, the AAS has very kindly agreed to make it public, so that everyone in education and outreach can have reference to it. You can find it at http://aas.org/outreach/moose.

Comments and suggestions for the resource guide are more than welcome. Before you suggest an addition, we ask you to look at the categories that are included and not included. For example, the MOOSE does not contain individual astronomy activities or pages that explain specific astronomical developments. Send your suggestions to the author at fraknoi_andrew@fhda.edu.

For other resource guides that deal with astronomical subject matter, please see https://www.astrosociety.org/education/astronomy-resource-guides/.

References