



Hello, world: Harnessing social media for the Rosetta mission

Emily Baldwin (1), Claudia Mignone (1), Karen O'Flaherty (1), Anne-Mareike Homfeld (1), Markus Bauer (2), and Mark McCaughrean (1)

(1) European Space Agency (ESA/ESTEC), Keplerlaan 1, Postbus 299, 2200 AG Noordwijk, The Netherlands (emily.baldwin@esa.int), (2) European Space Agency (ESA/ESAC), P.O. Box 78, E-28691 Villanueva de la Cañada, Madrid, Spain

The European Space Agency's (ESA) comet-chasing Rosetta mission was launched in 2004, before social media became a popular tool for mainstream communication. By harnessing a range of platforms for communicating the key messages of this unprecedented mission as it reached its destination ten years later, new audiences were reached and a global impact was achieved.

Rosetta-specific social media accounts – @ESA_Rosetta on Twitter, the Rosetta Mission Facebook page and the rosettamission Instagram account – were developed during 2013/14 and used alongside the traditional reporting line of the main ESA website and the Rosetta blog to build awareness about the mission. Coordinated with ESA's existing social media channels (Flickr, YouTube, G+, Twitter, Facebook and Livestream) and with the support of ESA's country desks and Rosetta partner agency accounts (including @philae2014), information could be shared in a number of European languages, ensuring a wide reach across Europe – and the world.

We discuss the roles of the various social media accounts in supporting and promoting the competitions and social media campaigns that were built around the key mission milestones of 2014: waking up from deep space hibernation (January), arriving at Comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko (August) and naming the landing site for Philae ahead of the landing event in November. We discuss the different approach to each channel, such as the first person twitter accounts, the dialogue with and between blog users, and the discussions held live via G+ Hangouts with leading scientists and spacecraft operators. We compare and contrast the audiences, the interaction we had with them and how challenges were overcome.

We also use the science-fiction-meets-science-fact Ambition short movie, and its “undercover” dissemination on social media, as an example of how the profile of the Rosetta mission was raised in a unique way.

By using a variety of social media platforms to target different audiences with specific content in a coordinated way, we have been able to share the human aspect of the mission, allowing our audiences to feel part of every step of the adventure.