



What does the InOMN mean to a national research institute like INAF?

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Abstract

I could not resist the temptation to use the slogan of InOMN 2011 for the title of this abstract; in addition to the description of our past experience in InOMN 2010, it has offered me the opportunity to share with you why a scientific research institute should promote this kind of event. The National Institute for Astrophysics is the main institute in Italy for research in this field. If, in one the hand, INAF is due to spread its scientific results to the public, then, on the other hand, it follows that an immediate link between public observation of the Moon, using little telescopes, and these results is not present. The reason why we should participate in InOMN can be summarized in one single word: humility. The Moon is the nearer celestial object that everybody can watch; it is the bridge between common people and astronomers. The first thing to do is see the sky, and then you can watch it. These first two steps are affordable to everyone without any additional help. In a third step you can observe it. Only at the very end of this process you can study the sky. These two last steps usually need a support from professionals. Observing the Moon with professionals narrows the gap between scientists and common people and opens the road to comprehension of astrophysical laws. Reaching more than ten thousand people from all over our country, as was the case for InOMN 2010, is not only important, but necessary for our institute; in this way, we raise the social consensus of our work, stimulate the younger generation to follow scientific study, and create a network with astronomy amateurs: all of which are essential to organizing these kinds of events. We used all possible channels to spread news about the event, including the Web and social networks (such as Facebook and Twitter), which we customized according to our language and cultural context. Using this approach, we covered all of Italy, with the additional help of astronomy

amateurs and by investing a bit of money in gadget, like Moon maps, to provide people with souvenirs.