

## Report on Press activities at the EPSC-DPS Joint Meeting 2011



Press conference on Dawn results at EPSC-DPS Joint Meeting 2011.  
Credit: Lee Pullen/Europlanet/Science Office

The EPSC-DPS Joint Meeting 2011 proved an interesting challenge for the press team. Not only were there 1780 abstracts submitted for the meeting to assess in finding the stories, we had the added experiment of bringing together the DPS and EPSC approaches to running a conference press office. In

previous years at EPSC, the Europlanet press officers have written between 10 and 20 press releases and issued them under an embargo for the day of the presentation. By contrast, DPS organises daily press briefings and expects the press officers of the authors' institutions to produce any accompanying press release.

This year, we merged the two methodologies. We had a team of three in the press office for EPSC-DPS 2011: Vishnu Reddy, the DPS press officer, myself and Lee Pullen from Science Office, who also acted as our official photographer for the meeting (you can see Lee's photos on the EPSC-DPS Flickr group: <http://www.flickr.com/groups/epsc-dps2011/>).

As a 'taster' for the meeting, we issued two press releases over the weekend embargoed for the Monday morning. During the week, we held six press briefings (five in English and one in French) featuring a total of 25 speakers. Muriel Ilous from CNRS provided support in contacting the National media, with assistance from Thierry Fouchet in putting together the programme for the French press briefing. We issued a further 10 press releases during the week to accompany the press briefings.

Daily press briefings were held during the lunch break to fit in with the scientific programme. Some days were themed around a single mission – Monday's press briefing was given over to results from Dawn at Vesta and the Wednesday briefing was MESSENGER results from

Mercury. The other days were a 'mixed bag' of presentations from a variety of sessions. The French press briefing was held on Thursday afternoon.



Press conference at EPSC-DPS Joint Meeting 2011. Credit: Lee Pullen/Europlanet/Science Office

The press briefings were webcast live over the Internet and we set up a chat room where journalists could log on and ask questions. This worked well for the majority of the meeting, except on the Wednesday when a

technical fault prevented the live webcast. However,

the broadcasts were also recorded and were posted on the Copernicus website within 24-48 hours. You can still access them through the EPSC-DSP website (<http://meetings.copernicus.org/epsc-dps2011/>) through the 'Webstreaming' item in the left hand menu.

Thirty seven journalists registered to attend the meeting – more than twice as many as have attended any previous EPSC. A further 12 participated remotely in the press briefings via the chat room. Releases were picked up around the world, including by the AFP, RIA Novosti, EuropaPress, Nature, Science, Scientific American, MSNBC, Yahoo News, NASA, Spiegel Online, Welt Online, Discovery News, National Geographic, the BBC and many more. Thanks to the team at the University of Nantes, the meeting also had good coverage in the local press.

The briefings were well received by the journalists and Copernicus has recorded 3000 accesses of the webcast pages. On the downside, the briefings took a significant amount of time to organise in the run-up to the meeting and also took a large chunk out of each day on site, which meant it was very difficult for the press officers to participate in any other aspect the meeting. There were no obvious signs of an increase in coverage as a result of the briefings.

Another experiment at EPSC-DPS 2011 was having a coordinated presence on the Twitter. Before the meeting, Europlanet had only made tentative use of Twitter and had a handful of followers, so this was an opportunity to really launch our presence on this social media platform and try to build our following. Robert Massey and Thierry Fouchet both put in sterling efforts tweeting on behalf of @europlanetmedia. Robert also re-tweeted and promoted the meeting to the Royal Astronomical Society's 2000+ followers and his own 750+ followers. We had a big boost in that Emily Lakdawalla from the Planetary Society Blog, who has around 12500 followers, was very active in covering the meeting on Twitter and generated a huge amount of discussion.

I didn't get round to using any Twitter analysis tools at the time. However, using Google's site specific search on twitter.com, I picked up 969 tweets using the hashtag #DPSEPSC, 71 using the tag #EPSCDPS2011 (next time we need to promote an official hashtag before the meeting). There were 11400 tweets mentioning DPS-EPSC/EPSC-DPS. We attracted around 150 new followers for @europlanetmedia during the meeting and were overall very pleased with the response to the meeting through Twitter.

Excellent support was provided throughout the meeting by the team from the University of Nantes and by Copernicus, especially in organising the webcasts for the briefings and the chat rooms. Special thanks should go to Mario Ebel from Copernicus and Olivier Grasset, Stéphane Le Mouélic, Eric Quézin and Julie Danet from the University of Nantes.

We now look forward to EPSC 2012 in Madrid!

**Anita Heward, October 2011.**