



Adler Planetarium Zooniverse Announces NASA Partnership Leveraging World Leading Scientific Expertise

July 22, 2020- Chicago's Adler Planetarium, along with its *Zooniverse* team and the team from the University of Minnesota, and NASA are pleased to announce a new partnership leveraging world-leading expertise across organizations to advance citizen science capabilities and achievements.

Zooniverse is the largest platform for people-powered research in the world. To date, more than two million *Zooniverse* volunteers have come together to assist professional researchers in over 240 projects, enabling research that would not be possible, or practical, otherwise. Volunteers don't need any specialized background, training, or expertise to participate in any *Zooniverse* projects, and can contribute to real academic research, on their own computers, at their own convenience.

Projects leveraging the *Zooniverse* platform have resulted in new discoveries, datasets useful to the wider research community, and have been highlighted in many scientific [publications](#). From astronomy to zoology, cancer research to climate science, arts and humanities, the *Zooniverse* platform provides researchers a set of shared tools and a standardized online infrastructure at no expense, enabling research teams to build highly sophisticated and successful projects.

"*Zooniverse* has already helped NASA's citizen scientists discover thousands of exoplanets, brown dwarfs, and circumstellar disks, map Martian terrain and Earth's Kelp forests," said Dr. Marc Kuchner, NASA Citizen Science Officer. "Working more closely with this team will open up even more opportunities for the public to experience participating in real NASA science and for NASA's scientists to benefit from the keen passion and intellect of the *Zooniverse* community. I can't wait to see what incredible new discoveries come from this new relationship."

"We're thrilled to deepen our relationship and partnership with NASA," said Dr. Laura Trouille, Vice President of Science Engagement & Visualization at the Adler Planetarium and *Zooniverse* Co-Lead. "These new efforts are going to have a tremendous impact on researchers and provide new and exciting opportunities for our worldwide community of citizen scientists."

As part of this agreement, NASA has pledged two years of support for the *Zooniverse* team at the Adler Planetarium and the University of Minnesota. This funding will contribute to *Zooniverse's* efforts to develop and maintain its

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cutting-edge research platform. This partnership also aims to spark new innovations in the growing integration of machine learning and the development of advanced research tools through the shared expertise of the two organizations.

“As NASA continues to expand our collective reach both into the cosmos and here on Earth, the size of the data sets generated are growing exponentially,” said Dr. Lucy Fortson, Associate Head and Professor of the School of Physics & Astronomy at the University of Minnesota and *Zooniverse* co-founder. “It’s not just machine learning or artificial intelligence that will get the most out of these data, but the combination of both AI and human intelligence brought to bear by *Zooniverse* volunteers. We’re really looking forward to the fantastic discoveries that will be made possible through this new partnership.”

About the Adler Planetarium:

The Adler Planetarium connects people to the Universe and each other. Whether it is introducing a guest to the Ring Nebula, a neighborhood school to a community partner, a research team to a network of citizen scientists, or one staff member to another, the Adler’s focus on meaningful connections dates back nearly a century.

The museum typically hosts more than half a million visitors each year and reaches millions more through youth STEAM programs, neighborhood skywatching events, people-powered research, and other outreach efforts. Today, the Adler is bringing our unique approach—scientific exploration rooted in community and connection—to guests from around the world who can enjoy the digital Adler from their own homes, libraries, schools or offices. With the Adler’s support, people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities gain the confidence to explore their universe together and return to their communities ready to think critically and creatively about any challenge that comes their way.

About the University of Minnesota and UMN *Zooniverse* team:

The University of Minnesota Twin Cities is ranked No. 9 in research among all U.S. public universities and is one of only five universities in the nation with an engineering school, a medical school, a law school, a veterinary medical school, and an agricultural school all on one campus. The *Zooniverse* platform was developed in part by researchers in the University of Minnesota’s School of Physics and Astronomy and, through the University of Minnesota’s continued involvement, is now the world’s largest and most popular people-powered online research platform with more than two million volunteers around the world who come together to assist professional researchers.

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About NASA:

From studying our own planet's biodiversity, to finding new planets outside of our solar system, NASA's citizen science projects reveal the unknown for the benefit of all humankind. NASA's citizen scientists have contributed to numerous scientific publications and made thousands of scientific discoveries, including most of the known comets, the oldest protoplanetary disk, and a new kind of aurora. For more information on current NASA citizen science projects, visit <https://science.nasa.gov/citizenscience>.

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