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## **TravelingGeologist: an online platform for disseminating Earth Science research and inspiring the next generation of field geologists**

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To more effectively inspire the next generation of Earth scientists, research community efforts at outreach must adapt to the changing technological and informational ecosystem in which young people today find themselves (e.g. blogs, social media, viral marketing, web-based education, etc.). Although there are currently a number of successful individual and institutional efforts at reaching potential students through web-based outlets, many fail to effectively connect primary researchers directly to a lay audience (relying instead on intermediaries that might dilute the recruiting impact of “producer-to-consumer” interactions); none appear to have reached a critical mass of contributing authors and subscribed followers; and few have released detailed metrics on growth trajectories, impact, or lay reach. We offer data from the TravelingGeologist as a case study in successful direct-to-consumer science outreach and recruitment.

Earth science is a field that naturally links to outdoor recreation and adventure travel. This connection is what has led many to become Earth scientists. Unfortunately, an increasing number of institutions are lessening their focus on integrating field-based learning in the classroom as well as in undergraduate and graduate degree research projects. But we argue that maintaining a close connection to field-based research and teaching remains an important way to recruit students into the discipline, whether as active contributors or else as literate citizens.

For most academic Earth scientists, research involves time in the field taking measurements or collecting samples. This often requires travel to foreign countries and in some cases in the most desolate regions of the Earth. This naturally provides an important opportunity to share our journeys and adventures in an effort to inspire and attract the next generation of Earth scientists. In order to most effectively communicate our passion and science with a broader community, it is important to utilize multiple outlets of communication that broach the topics of our science on different levels of detail and engagement (i.e. website, blog, Instagram, Twitter, etc.).

The TravelingGeologist is a non-profit, web-based platform on which Earth scientists can share their experiences in various places on the planet with the expressed purpose of attracting and inspiring budding scientists. Additionally, it provides an arena whereon results of research can be shared with the large lay- and expert audience. This is especially important when government institutions fund research

projects where sharing these results and adventures with the wider public is required. Beyond the ability to inspire new students and communicate science to the general public, it is our hope that TravelingGeologist can help foster communication to and potential collaboration with other Earth scientists. Writing for a broad audience would help Earth scientists communicate technical results to the wider Earth science community.

It is our goal that through well-designed web-based media in a wide array of social media markets, the TravelingGeologist will provide a hub for Earth scientists to disseminate their research to the masses and inspire the next generation of Earth scientists.

