

"NASA Explorers": Making Science More Human

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Image Source: NASA.

NASA uses Adobe Creative Cloud to create a popular, highly informative video series with more than 3.6M unique views.

From the first moon landing to the Hubble space telescope, NASA is a powerful symbol of human ingenuity and exploration. Behind every NASA mission is a dedicated team of pioneers, risk-takers, and explorers—people who often work tirelessly behind the scenes to expand human understanding. Now, their stories are being told in the digital video series “NASA Explorers”, which attracted more than 2.2 million viewers in its first season and more than 3.6 million unique views in total.

The first season explores the Earth’s cryosphere, introducing viewers to NASA scientists studying some of the Earth’s most extreme environments, from sea ice to glaciers to permafrost. They’re working to understand the Earth and how it’s changing and what that means for people worldwide.

“We wanted to tell the stories of NASA explorers—not just astronauts but also engineers inventing exciting new technology and field scientists braving tough conditions to find answers to big questions,” says Lauren Ward, Earth Science Video Producer at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center. “By focusing on the human themes of resilience, teamwork, and even failure, we make science more approachable for people.”

Launching a successful new series

As executive producer of “NASA Explorers”, Lauren Ward established a blueprint for producing new seasons. That’s important because her video team, dedicated to Earth Science, isn’t the only one with stories to tell. In addition to video teams within the Office of Communications spanning Heliophysics, Astrophysics, and Planetary Science, there are other centers and facilities across the U.S. eager to share their work. They’ve produced shows on strikingly different topics—the Apollo moon missions, wildfires, and microgravity—with more to come.



“Our repeatable production process enables other teams to easily pick up a season and run with it on any topic they choose,” says Lauren. “With Adobe Premiere Pro, Audition, and After Effects, we were able to create a standard workflow and templates to streamline handoffs and meet strict production schedules.”

That process paid off, as Lauren’s team filmed, edited, and produced graphics for the nine episodes in the first season in just 18 weeks, in addition to their regular video production workload. NASA produced and released the episodes on YouTube one at a time, as they were completed. By monitoring the performance of each episode, the team was able to adapt in real time to connect with people and drive viewership. That meant using the flexible Adobe post-production workflow to edit the style and layout of upcoming episodes based on how people responded to previous videos. It also meant understanding viewer behavior patterns and knowing when to promote new episodes on social media.

“NASA Explorers” also has a major following on the series’ Facebook page, featuring a weekly behind-the-scenes segment on Facebook Live following each new episode. The first three seasons are now also available on Hulu, reaching whole new audiences and teeing them up for season four (available on YouTube) and season five (coming soon).

The series is only one piece of the agency’s mission to keep the public informed and promote scientific literacy—both essential to its work as a public institution. Adobe Creative Cloud plays a big role in making that possible.

NASA informs and captivates audiences with video

Video is an important part of NASA’s communication strategy. It is an extremely effective way to convey information to the public, making science more approachable even when the subject matter is highly technical.

“We produce a wide range of video content to keep the public informed and interested in NASA’s work,” Lauren says. “Every time a big scientific paper comes out, we produce a video. There are videos covering specific satellite missions. And we create a lot of explainer videos on scientific concepts such as the carbon cycle.”

NASA’s video teams—distributed across the Goddard Space Flight Center, Langley Research Center, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Johnson Space Center, and Kennedy Space Center—all use Premiere Pro to edit the footage and rely on Audition for advanced sound mixing. In addition, there is a specialized animation team creating stunning on-screen graphics and animations, aided by After Effects and other 3D software.

“Because everyone is set up on Adobe Creative Cloud, I can pass along files, b-roll, and templates to other editors, and they can pick up where I left off,” says Lauren.

That efficiency is essential as NASA fulfills one of its central missions: to report back to the public on its activities and generate excitement for its scientific programs.

As Lauren says, “NASA is a publicly funded institution. Keeping the public informed about our missions and research is an important part of our charter.”