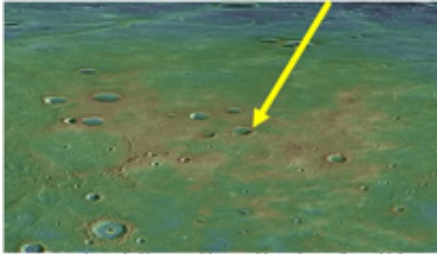


Carnegie hosts crater-naming contest

December 16 2014



The MESSENGER Education and Public Outreach (EPO) Team is launching a [competition](#) this week to name [five impact craters](#) on Mercury. The contest is open to all Earthlings, except for members of the mission's EPO team. The contest runs from December 15, 2014, to January 15, 2015.

NASA's MESSENGER spacecraft has been in orbit about Mercury since March 2011. The mission's EPO team is led by Julie Edmonds of the Carnegie Institution for Science.

According to the International Astronomical Union (IAU)—the governing body of planetary and satellite nomenclature since 1919—all new craters on Mercury must be named after an artist, composer, or writer who was famous for more than 50 years and has been dead for more than three years. [See the current list of named Mercury craters.](#)

The EPO team's contest allows the public to immortalize an important person in the arts and humanities from anywhere in the world.

Submissions will be accepted beginning midnight (00:00 UTC) on December 15, 2014, until January 15, 2015 (23:59 UTC). Fifteen finalist names for craters will be submitted to the International Astronomical Union (IAU) for selection of the five winners. Winning submissions will be announced by the IAU to coincide with the end of MESSENGER's orbital operations in late March or April 2015. IAU decisions will be final.

The MESSENGER spacecraft has far surpassed expectations both in the duration of the mission and in the quality and quantity of data. The mission will end this spring as the tiny craft succumbs to gravity and impacts on Mercury. The EPO team organized the competition to celebrate the mission's achievements.

Edmonds advises participants to first research the artist, composer, or writer under consideration before filling out the contest entry. "Once online, registrants will be asked to submit a short description of their chosen individual's contributions to their field, as well as an authoritative source for background information," she said.

The name cannot have any political, religious, or military significance. Nor can other features in the Solar System have the same name. For example, Ansel Adams is not eligible because there is a feature on the Moon with the name Adams (even though it was not named for Ansel). Participants can check their ideas against the [list of named Solar System features](#) and enter the name in the "Search by Feature Name" box in the upper right corner.

"This brave little craft, not much bigger than a Volkswagen Beetle, has travelled more than 8 billion miles since 2004—getting to the planet and then in orbit," Edmonds said. "We would like to draw international

attention to the achievements of the mission and the guiding engineers and scientists on Earth who have made the MESSENGER mission so outstandingly successful."

The goal of MESSENGER was to take 2,500 images of the planet, but it has returned more than 250,000 images. "We now have a detailed, high-resolution map of the entire planet," Edmonds noted. "As scientists study the incredible data returned by MESSENGER, it becomes important to give names to surface features that are of special scientific interest. Having names for landforms such as mountains, craters, and cliffs makes it easier for scientists and others to communicate."

More information: Enter the contest online at namecraters.carnegiescience.edu/.

Provided by Carnegie Institution for Science

Citation: Carnegie hosts crater-naming contest (2014, December 16) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-12-carnegie-hosts-crater-naming-contest.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--