

# *The* Friends of PlanetQuest

## *Newsletter*

Vol. 1, No. 1

### **The PlanetQuest Mission:**

**To inspire the people of the world with the thrill of individual discovery, a better understanding of our uniquely precious planet, and a wider perspective on our place in the universe.**

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our first Friends of PlanetQuest Newsletter. We'd first like to thank you for showing interest in what we're doing. It's taken the PlanetQuest team a long time to get to this place, and we'll certainly appreciate your support as we build the most exciting science project on the planet.

Our aim is to send this short informal newsletter to you about once a month. The purpose is to let you know what we've accomplished, what we're working on, and how you can get involved.

Et une petite note à nos Amis francophones: Bienvenu, bienvenu à vous! Nos excuses que nous ne sommes pas capable de produire un bulletin d'informations bilingue chaque mois, mais soit assuré que nous pensons à vous! Plus, vos euros donnés valent de plus en plus ici, comment triste...

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## **News!!**

### **\$408m Kepler Mission Adopts Our TDA**

Yup, it's true: NASA will be using a customized version of our Transit Detection Algorithm, optimized for space-borne observing, as its sole method of locating new planets. Dr. Jon Jenkins, who worked with PlanetQuest cofounder Dr. Laurance Doyle in the late 1990s to develop the original photometric transit detection algorithms and who continues as our own TDA expert, is the lead signal detection specialist and a coinvestigator on the Kepler mission. Jon is continuing to create the best ground-based algorithms available, and we're lucky to have him on our team.

### **PlanetQuest Public Web Launched**

In December, we launched a basic public website to tell the world who we are and what we're doing. You probably know this already if you're reading this newsletter. We're constantly making improvements as we go, and we thought we'd let you know what's in store in the coming months:

- A Flash demo of the coming PlanetQuest Collaboratory—you'll get to see how the parts work together in an interactive mock-up. This is a preview of next-generation distributed computing at its best.
- Lots and lots of education content. This will be a major focus for us—posting interactive ways that you can learn about science, astrophysics, global histories of astronomy (yes, there's more than one), and math.

- More information on our telescopes, including news about the Crossley telescope upgrades, for example.

## World-Changing Science—Your Help Required

If you subscribe to this Newsletter, you probably have some idea of what PlanetQuest will accomplish. Think of it, though: in five years, we hope to have 20 million PlanetQuesters around the world, discovering literally hundreds of planets each year. Along the way, they'll learn not only a great deal about science and math, but also that each little PlanetQuester is a vital part of our own world community and connected to the larger universe. This is public science in every possible way; when you discover something out there, your name goes down in our PQ catalogs and in astronomical history. Every PlanetQuest participant is doing real science and contributing to our global effort to learn more about our universe. The resulting science, like the universe, belongs to everyone—not just professional scientists.

**But we need your financial support to launch this global effort!** We just recently added an easy way to donate to PQ: just hit the “Donate!” link at the top of any page (or click here: <http://www.planetquest.org/support/>). Yes, for the price of two small hot chocolates per month, you can help us build PlanetQuest into the world-changing organization it can be! We are a registered 501(c)(3) US nonprofit organization, so your donations are completely tax-deductible.

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## Quote of the Month

“Astronomy is useful, because it raises us above ourselves; it is useful, because it is grand, ... it shows us how small is man’s body, how great his mind. His intelligence can embrace the whole of this dazzling immensity in which his body is only an obscure point and enjoy its silent harmony.... Thus we can attain self-insight, something which cannot cost us too dear, since this insight makes us great.”

Henri Poincaré, 1903

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Best Wishes,

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