January 12, 2015

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for considering me for the position of Education & Public Outreach Project Manager for the LSST. Having watched the LSST take shape these past few years I would be thrilled to have a major role communicating and sharing the excitement felt by the scientific field for this project, the discoveries it will make and finding new and novel ways to invite the public to take part in this unique endeavor.

In the past 5 years I have worked in various different roles within the the Zooniverse and currently act as the technical lead of the project. During that time I developed a strong appreciation for the power of giving the public access to real data. The authenticity of the experiences we built have been essential to not only establishing citizen science as a legitimate research method but in creating a powerful platform to engaging members of the public in science in a transformative way.

To me LSST represents a golden opportunity to explore this approach of data driven engagement even further. One of this things that drew me to apply for this job is the policy the LSST has taken to provide a pipeline of data dedicated to EPO activities. Allowing citizen scientists, students, planetarium visitors and the public in general to access images and data from the telescope as it becomes available to the scientific community is a huge opportunity to evolve how we think of public participation in science. The challenges to doing so are the same challenges we faced with the Zooniverse project: developing flexible powerful intuitive tools and interfaces that can build and facilitate meaningful experiences with this data at its core.

Not only does data driven public participation provide deep engagement opportunities but it also represents an opportunity to scale this participate to large numbers of people. Using the ubiquity of the internet we where able to reach over 1 million people with the Zooniverse project, LSST has the potential to reach an even large numbers. The technical and creative challenges of operating at that scale are ones I have a lot of experience with and can bring to this project.

Like with any effort to engage the public in science, assessment is key to success. Not just for providing evidence of impact but also to improve the approaches and tools being developed. While at the Zooniverse I worked with researchers at Syracuse University to use traditional surveys but also data mining techniques to help understand users interaction with out projects. We found ways to asses not only user engagement but, more interestingly, behavior and motivation. One of these efforts exposed conceptual problems with our tutorial system and another showed that participants who took part in the Snapshot Serengeti project learned how to identify previously unknown species as they participated in the project. As a result I have become very interested in using both traditional methods and exploring new ways to use data to create assessment metrics for EPO.

I would love to have the opportunity to bring the lessons I have learned and the skills I have acquired from participating in and running both traditional outreach programs and novel online projects to LSST. I believe that LSST has the opportunity to push EPO into new territories where students and the public are not just spectators but are invited to become part of the discovery process. I can think of few opportunities that are more exiting.

Stuart Lynn
1817 South Allport − 60608 Chicago − USA
☏ +1 (312) 394 0797 • ✉ stuart@zooniverse.org