

European Geosciences Union, April 2008, Vienna, Austria.

Astrobiology and Mars: robotic Mars exploration and the search for evidence of life on Mars

Remarkable and sometimes astounding news from Mars continues to return to Earth from the NASA Mars Exploration Rovers and ESA's Mars Express orbiter. Both these missions have contributed greatly to our current perception of what Mars must once have been like – a planet that was perfectly habitable in its early history and upon which simple life could have evolved and survived. As yet, no compelling data towards evidence of life on Mars has been presented, leading both ESA and NASA to devise strategies to explore the red planet for its possible biological history. In preparation for this technically and scientifically challenging endeavour, it is paramount that we rigorously test and hone the analytical instrumentation considered for solving the above question. This includes laboratory based testing and experimentation, field testing in terrestrial planetary analogue environments, or simulation experiments. With astrobiology missions planned for Mars exploration, planetary protection aspects will further play an important role in the mission design.

We therefore invite papers for this session from all aspects of astrobiological research relevant to the subjects of life on Mars and astrobiology Mars exploration. Papers covering aspects of analytical instrumentation for Mars exploration, testing of such instruments in the laboratory and field, laboratory and/or space experimentation, as well as contributions that deal with issues related to planetary protection and spacecraft sterilization procedures are encouraged. With this scheme we hope to facilitate the exchange of latest knowledge on research and development regarding astrobiology exploration of Mars, as well as to stimulate discussion on future planetary exploration strategies.

Abstract deadline: 14th January 2007

Financial support application deadline: 7th December 2007.

All other information: <http://meetings.copernicus.org/egu2008/index.html>