



Rappahannock Astronomy Club

RAClub.org and Groups.io Use Patterns

While there is some overlap in capability between these two resources, they are intended to serve different purposes. The distinctions may best be understood in light of the fact that websites are publicly accessible and RAClub@Groups.io is accessible via controlled access subscription only.

Briefly, www.raclub.org is RAC's public location for information about club business, undertakings, and accomplishments, available to anyone with Internet access.

RAClub@Groups.io is RAC's internal access-controlled conduit for near real-time non-public communication among members.

The key areas of overlap that have caused confusion in the past are long-term archival of documents, technical papers, presentations, and the display of quality astrophotography. While both the website and Groups.io have these capabilities, these functions should reside solely on the www.raclub.org website except when they are strictly private and internal to RAC. The reason for this is that, unlike RAClub@Groups.io, the www.raclub.org website is accessible to anyone with Internet access and is thus RAC's portal for public display of our accomplishments to the astronomical community. RAClub@Groups.io is only accessible to RAC members - information and images stored there are not accessible to the broader community. Now that RAC is a member of NASA/JPL's Night Sky Network, we especially want to feature our work to other clubs.

With these distinctions in mind, www.raclub.org is the proper destination for placement of meeting minutes, program presentations, club newsletters, technical papers, archival documents, lesson plans for teaching astronomy to scouts and youths, member astrophotography, observing lists and other astronomy observing resources, tutorials and aids, star party announcements and directions, meeting announcements, public outreach announcements, directions on how to join RAC, public member profiles, links to web-based astronomy resources, etc.

The website also features a news section on the homepage, which is updated with meeting and star party announcements, and RAC accomplishments. Star party confirmation and cancellation notices are posted by noon on the day of the star party. An email is also sent via RAClub@Groups.io. Star party announcements are the only aspect of the website that approach real time; RAClub@Groups.io is much better suited for real-time contact within RAC.

RAC maintains a Facebook page to make itself known to Facebook users. Basic information about RAC and its monthly star parties are provided. However, visitors are guided to www.raclub.org for more in-depth and timely information.

RAClub@Groups.io is RAC's internal real-time channel of choice, intended for more dynamic communication among RAC members and for scheduling and reminders of upcoming events. RAClub@Groups.io forwards emails to all subscribed members, providing an email communication path for RAC. Photos of the picnic and other informal or private RAC events, to be shared only with RAC and not related to quality astrophotography, are also appropriate for RAClub@Groups.io.