Dennis O'Brien, bio & publications

Dennis O'Brien 	Dennis O'Brien is a lawyer, "a child of Sputnik" and a lifelong space enthusiast. In 1984-85 he was a member of the NASA - UC Law Research Project in San Francisco, one of the first formal studies of space law, where his paper "OTV: An Argument for the Independent Trader" called for orbital transfer vehicles to be owned and operated by the private sector. In 2017 he founded The Space Treaty Project, a scientific and educational nonprofit based in Mendocino County, California, whose mission is "to give people hope and inspiration by helping the nations of the world to build a common future". Since then he has produced dozens of articles, papers and presentations on space law and policy, especially on the national and international law that affects private activity in outer space and on the Moon Treaty, and has spoken at many international conferences, in person and online. He is a member of the Adaptive Governance Working Group of the Moon Village Association and of the Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activity (GEGSLA). At Space Renaissance International he is Director of Policy and Legal Affairs.

Professional history (in brief)

- Lawyer
- 1984-1985 - Member of the NASA - UC Law Research Project, University of California Law, San Francisco
- Since 2017 - Founder of The Space Treaty Project, Mendocino County, California

Space Renaissance International

- Director of Policy and Legal Affairs (elected at the 4th World Congress, July 2026)
- Member of the SRI Space Law Committee and co-chair of the Space Policy Committee
- "Outer Space and the Approaching Seldon Crisis", Space Renaissance International conference, 15 September 2023

Articles

- "Space Resources 2024: In Search of the Grand Bargain", Modern Diplomacy, 26 May 2024
- "UN-COPUOS space resources meetings reveal wide spectrum of opinions but also some consensus on scope of discussions", SpaceWatch.Global, July 2023
- "Space Law 2023: Can nationalists and internationalists find common ground?", SpaceWatch.Global, May 2023
- "Will COPUOS five-year mission produce a new 'international governance instrument' for outer space resources?", Modern Diplomacy, 3 February 2023
- "Confidential or Shared? The Discovery of Outer Space Resources by the Private Sector", SpaceWatch.Global, September 2022
- "Is outer space a de jure common-pool resource?", The Space Review, 25 October 2021
- "In the new spectrum of space law, will Biden favor the Moon Treaty?", The Space Review, 23 November 2020
- "The Artemis Accords: Repeating the Mistakes of the Age of Exploration", Modern Diplomacy, 10 June 2020
- "Legal Support for the Private Sector: An Implementation Agreement for the Moon Treaty" (peer reviewed), Journal of Advances in Astronautics Science and Technology, 20 May 2020
- "Hard law or soft law? The debate about the future of space law", The Space Review, 13 April 2020
- "Why improved registration is essential for public and private activities on the Moon", The Space Review, 13 January 2020
- "Beyond UNISPACE: It's Time for the Moon Treaty", The Space Review, 21 January 2019
- "Mars: A case study in space law", The Space Review, 26 November 2018
- "Space law 2018: nationalists versus internationalists", The Space Review, 30 April 2018
- "Why it's a bad idea to weaken the Moon Treaty", The Space Review, 5 March 2018

Papers and presentations

- "Sustainability and Space Resources", Space Resources Week 2024, Luxembourg, 26 March 2024

- "Governance Without a New Government: A Model Resource Agreement for the Moon Treaty", UN/China 2nd Global Partnership Workshop on Space Exploration and Innovation, 22 November 2022, and Commons in Space 2022, 2 November 2022
- "The Status of Lunar Settlements and Settlers under Customary International Law", 6th Global Moon Village Workshop & Symposium, 8 November 2022
- "Exclusion or Sharing? An Article 11 Resource Agreement for the Moon Treaty", IISL / IAC, Dubai, October 2021
- "Avoiding a new Age of Imperialism", GLEX 2021, Saint Petersburg, June 2021
- "Legal Support for Polycentric Governance: An Article 11 Implementation Agreement for the Moon Treaty", Polycentricity Conference, 18 May 2021
- "An Implementation Agreement for the Moon Treaty: A Basic Framework of Governance for the Commons of Outer Space", Commons in Space Conference, 22 February 2021
- "Legal Support for the Moon Village: An Implementation Agreement for the Moon Treaty", Moon Village Association workshop and symposium, 10 November 2020
- "Legal Support for the Private Sector: An Implementation Agreement for the Moon Treaty", Moon Society Lunar Development Conference, 20 July 2020
- "Returning to the Moon: Legal Challenges as Humanity Begins to Settle the Solar System", panelist, Global Space Law Center, Cleveland State University, 6 March 2020
- "MVA White Paper: Registration of Landing Sites and Other Surface Activity on the Moon" (principal author) and "Closing the Gap in Space Law", Moon Village Association 3rd International Symposium, Tokyo/Kyoto, December 2019
- "Public Policy Obligations of the Moon Treaty", poster, 27th IAF-UNOOSA Workshop, Washington D.C., October 2019
- "The Way Forward: An Implementation Agreement for the Moon Treaty", 8th CSA-IAA Conference on Advanced Space Technology, Shanghai, September 2019, and National Law University, Andhra Pradesh, October 2019
- "The Grand Bargain: Private Property Rights for Public Policy Obligations", symposium, Changsha, April 2019
- "UNISPACE +50: Time for the Moon Treaty", International Astronautical Congress, Bremen, September 2018
- "OTV: An Argument for the Independent Trader", NASA - UC Law Research Project, June 1985

Books

- Dennis O'Brien - "Major Tom: A Story of Hope" (novel, 2018)

Memberships

- Adaptive Governance Working Group, Moon Village Association
- Global Expert Group on Sustainable Lunar Activity (GEGSLA)
- Space Law Committee, Space Renaissance International

The Space Treaty Project - articles, papers and videos