

EDITORIAL

Within EARSeL we have a special officer for East-West Relations; when possible also in the Newsletter we pay special attention to developments in "Eastern" Europe. In this issue we have a contribution from Romania and a longer one on digital mapping as performed at the Geographic Studies Centre, Tirana, Albania.

Then there are two important contributions from ESA. The first article deals with the future ESA EO strategy and has been published earlier in the ESA Bulletin of May this year. One of the authors, Professor Southwood, gave a presentation on the subject at the Symposium in Enschede. The basic outline consists of an optional envelope programme on Earth Explorer and a set of optional programmes for individual Earth Watch missions. The second article deals with projects started in the framework of the Data User Programme (DUP), an optional programme for which only a limited number of countries have subscribed. The content of this article was also presented in Enschede by one of the authors, Dr. Houghs.

The Section "RS data, products and projects" starts off with an update on the space segment by Wim Bakker. It concentrates upon the launch of a Russian Zenit carrying aloft, among others, a Resurs satellite. The subsequent contribution is by ScanEx, Moscow, which has developed low cost local receiving stations for Resurs data. With this system the Resurs high resolution data (35 m x 45 m pixel) can be received. I consider it a positive development that more and more systems are being developed for local reception. It can overcome one of the problems in the operational use of spaceborne data. A larger problem has still to be solved: long term continuity for data acquisition (at least 15-20 years). As long as organisations responsible for mapping and monitoring cannot rely on longer term observation programmes, they cannot implement monitoring programmes based upon EO data. I was confronted with this situation in trying to establish a SAR-based monitoring system for the North Sea. Firstly, the cost aspect limited our source data to ERS sensors only. Secondly, there was only limited spatial temporal coverage for the specific geographic area. Thirdly, no guarantees could be given, and still cannot be given, for an operational successor to ERS-2. If Envisat is successfully launched and the ASAR functions properly this would only yield an additional period of shall we say 5 more years. Now, we come back to the cost aspect, maybe space technology is too expensive for this kind of application. I am curious to see what will be developed in the next years in the commercial field and, for example, in ESA's Earth Watch programme. One of the challenges for ESA will be to define the boundaries between commercial and pre-commercial.

This takes me back to the theme of our 1999 Annual Symposium in Valladolid: economic and environmental applications. I would like to remind you of the deadline for submitting abstracts which is the 1st of October.

The Editor.

NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATION AND ITS MEMBERS

2.1. Joint ISPRS/EARSeL Workshop, 3-4 June 1999 Valladolid, Spain

This workshop will directly follow the 19th EARSeL Symposium. Its aim is to unify activities of Working Groups (WGs) with similar and partly overlapping Terms of Reference and organise a workshop, permitting in-depth discussions on common significant and hot topics. The Workshop is organised by the following WGs:

- ISPRS WG III/5 "Remote Sensing and Vision Theories for Automatic Scene Interpretation", Chairs: D. Wang/B. Csatho (Ohio State Univ.),

- ISPRS ICWG IV/III.2 "Integration of Image Analysis and GIS", Chairs: E. Baltsavias (ETH Zurich), M. Hahn (Univ. Stuttgart),

- ISPRS WG VII/4 "Computer Assisted Image Interpretation and Analysis", Chairs: B. Koch (Freiburg Univ.), A. Sieber (JRC, Ispra),

- EARSeL SIG "Data Fusion", Chair: L. Wald (Ecole des Mines de Paris)

Preliminary topics of common interest include:

- Analysis and interpretation of multi-spectral, multi-resolution, and multi-sensor imagery
- Automatic extraction of topographic features
- Use of GIS and other databases to support image analysis
- Matching of image/object features and GIS objects for change detection and database update
- Techniques and tools for multi-sensor data fusion

- Algorithms/methods for combination of partial results of different techniques using data from one or multiple sensors ; uncertainty propagation
- Quality analysis and performance assessment of methods for the above tasks. Quantitative evaluation using test data and reference values.

The workshop will deal with both airborne and spaceborne sensors. A first announcement and Call for Papers will be issued soon.

2.2. Imaging Spectroscopy SIG

The first EARSeL Workshop on "Imaging Spectroscopy" will be hosted by the Remote Sensing Laboratories of the University of Zurich from 6-8 October. More than 70 papers are listed in the programme, split almost equally between oral and poster presentations. Speakers come not only from Europe but also from the USA, Canada and Australia., with invited papers by Prof. Alexander Goetz of the University of Colorado, Dr. K. Staenz of the Canada Centre for Remote Sensing, Dr. Mike Rast of ESA/ESTEC and Dr. T. Chrien of JPL, Pasadena. The programme is enclosed with this issue.

Registrations are handled by the EARSeL Secretariat and technical and local details may be obtained from : Dr. Michael Schaepman Remote Sensing Laboratories, University of Zurich, Winterthurerstrasse 190, CH-8057 Zurich, CH Tel: +41 1 635 51 45; Fax: +41 1 635 68 46 or 68 48; e-mail: schaep@geo.unizh.ch

2.3 News from Romania

We have received from correspondents in Romania, Dr. Daniela Coltuc and Dr. Florin Serban, a list of research laboratories in Romania, together with the key personnel and activities. In view of the economic difficulties in that country, it is difficult for these laboratories to become full members of EARSeL, but we keep them informed of our activities and send our Newsletter to some of these. Any EARSeL members wishing to find partners in Romania may contact the EARSeL Secretariat.

A NOAA satellite reception station has been installed at the National Institute for Aerospace Research in Bucharest by CRUTA (Romanian Centre for Remote Sensing Applications in Agriculture). The antenna receives images transmitted by the NOAA satellites as soon as they appear on the horizon. The antenna is equipped with a tracking system, powered by an extremely reliable motor. The equipment is complemented by an automatic acquisition and processing system thus ensuring an operational system reducing to a minimum human intervention.

The 5th Symposium on Optoelectronics (SIOEL '98) will be held in Bucharest from 23-25 September, accompanied by an exhibition. The symposium will focus on results and prospects in optoelectronic research and applications, including satellite and laser remote sensing.

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