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Satellites for Everyone

Terri Freemantle outlines a new initiative that aims to broaden the appeal of Earth Observation beyond the expert community

The spatial data community is no stranger to the value of remote sensing technology. But despite its ubiquitous use in smartphones and tablets, its advantages are less well known to the wider public.

One primary objective of the Satellite Applications Catapult is to improve the outreach of satellite technology to the non-space community. Hence, its Satellites for Everyone (S4E) programme. This is developing as a resource to spread awareness by explaining:

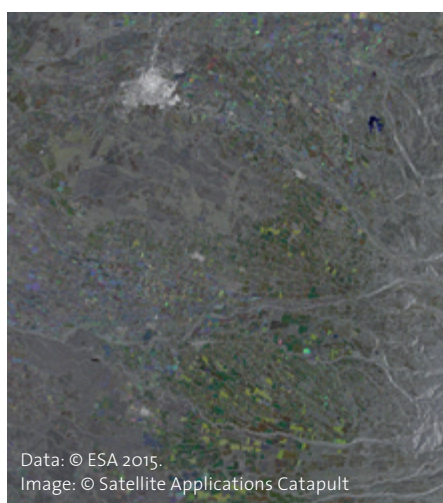
- What satellites do
- How they impact people's everyday activities and work
- The types of satellite data available and how this can be accessed
- What satellite data can be used for
- The space industry and key players
- Opportunity areas in the industry
- The future of satellite technology

Within S4E, satellite remote sensing has been identified as having a key role to play. S4E thus has a dedicated focus on how Earth Observation (EO) benefits everyday activities by showcasing tangible, real world examples.

Beyond Google

The initiative will show how satellite imagery goes 'beyond Google' and the traditional cartographic map with its potential for information extraction and exploitation and the creation of value-added products that facilitate ease of use. With data under the EU Copernicus programme being freely available, we envisage an uptake in the use of remote sensing and an opening-up of the space sector to businesses, organisations and individuals who have ideas for new satellite data applications.

Recognising the importance and potential of remote sensing, the Satel-



The Catapult will soon be providing UK national access to EU Sentinel satellite data. Pictured here is one of set of time-series images captured by Sentinel-1 over Concepcion, Chile, to trace changes in agriculture.

Data: © ESA 2015.
Image: © Satellite Applications Catapult

lite Applications Catapult will act as a neutral facilitator to assist in developing these new ideas. It means, enabling non-experts to use EO data as a valuable resource as well as promoting the creation of new businesses and innovative solutions. The Catapult is already well placed as a repository of information, contacts, training materials and expertise, all of which will support the industry when engaging with other markets and customers.

New data hub

To enhance its capability, the Catapult, in line with objectives outlined in the Innovation Growth Strategy and the S4E project, is improving the outreach of satellite data with a Data Discovery Hub (DDH).

The DDH provides ease of access to EO data sets. Compliant with INSPIRE and UK GEMINI 2.1, it responds to thematic database queries by helping the wider community choose the most appropriate data sources to suit their needs. For example, not only does it identify datasets suitable for, say, agricultural applications; it will also direct users to where they can be accessed.

In a further move, the Catapult, in association with RAL Space, and Airbus Defence and Space, has been contracted by the UK Space Agency to support the new UK National Collaborative Ground Segment, providing national data access for Sentinel-1 and -2 data.

A promising future for EO lies ahead, with projects such as S4E effectively engaging a wider, untapped audience in an easy-to-digest manner. With this insight, a new cadre of users will be better able to make informed decisions about the benefits that satellite technology confers. For more information please visit <https://sa.catapult.org.uk/satellites-4-everyone>



Spreading the message