



Terri Freemantle is Earth Observation Specialist with the Satellite Applications Catapult Ltd in Harwell, Oxfordshire

Copernicus: launching companies, not just satellites

Terri Freemantle explains how the Renaissance scholar continues to inspire those who seek greater understanding of the world around us

After the exhilaration of receiving operational data from Sentinel-1, comes another reason to get excited - the launch of Sentinel-2. The first of a two-satellite constellation, Sentinel-2 will deliver high-resolution optical data in 13 spectral bands over the Earth's land masses providing the next layer of data feeding into the Copernicus Land Monitoring Services.

In response to this, European nations are gearing up to build the necessary technical infrastructure and commercial partnerships needed to facilitate the exploitation of Sentinel data for commercial growth and academic research. In March, the European Space Agency signed a collaborative agreement with France and the UK to provide national access points for Sentinel-1 and 2 data.

Building a new community

The Satellite Applications Catapult, RAL Space and Airbus Defence & Space will support the UK Space Agency's (UKSA) new UK National Collaborative Ground Segment with the goal of making Copernicus data accessible in the UK. The partnership will capitalise on the systems, networks and users that each organisation already has in place to build a new innovative community where people from the space sector and other industries can interact

This is an important step for the space sector considering that the next generation of space companies don't yet exist. They will be led by entrepreneurs who engage in this data network and area able to spot and exploit new commercial opportunities. The result will be the creation of diverse services that contribute to our economic health, environmental responsibility and social well-being.

Finding the right platform

But access to data is just one part of the innovation story. For many start-ups and small businesses, finding the right platform on which

to showcase their ideas and attract appropriate business support is often the major barrier to success.

In late April at the House of Commons, the team behind Europe's leading Earth monitoring competition, the Copernicus Masters, launched its 2015 challenge round, looking for innovative applications in Earth observation data.

The challenge prizes combine comprehensive technical and business support and a substantial data package, exactly the kind of backing new ideas need to flourish and is why the Satellite Applications Catapult, along with Innovate UK and the UK Space Agency, is continuing its support for the competition in 2015.



A cash prize, plus access to business support services, data and a PR campaign are on offer to winners.

Seeking ideas and applications

This year the Catapult is sponsoring the Copernicus Masters Smart Cities and Intelligent Transport Challenge, looking for applications using Earth observation data to support critical infrastructure management and sustainable development. The winning ideas from all the challenges are also entered into the overall Copernicus Master prize with an additional cash investment of around £14,500 (€20,000).

The competition is growing in strength and has delivered some great success stories including Urthecast, the first company to stream HD footage of planet Earth from space and now a recognised pioneer in Earth observation space services who won the T-Systems Cloud Computing Challenge in 2011.

So if you have a great idea, it's worth taking a couple of hours out of your day to enter – it could be just the boost your business idea needs.

The competition closes for entries on 13 July 2015 and more information can be found at www.copernicus-masters.com.

The Catapult team is also happy to help guide entrants through the application process and can be reached at ukesnc@sa.catapult.org.uk or call 01235 239637.



Overall winners of the 2014 Copernicus Masters, Dr Andrew Sowter and Paul Bhatia from the University of Nottingham (3rd and 4th from left), receive their cheque for PUNNET - a novel procedure for monitoring and mapping land stability with millimetre-level precision. Photo: © Jan Kobel