

Online Journal of Space Communication

Volume 2
Issue 5 *Satellites Address the Digital Divide*
(Fall 2003)

Article 1

June 2021

Issue 5: From the Guest Editor

Bruce Elbert

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ohioopen.library.ohio.edu/spacejournal>



Part of the [Astrodynamics Commons](#), [Navigation, Guidance, Control and Dynamics Commons](#), [Space Vehicles Commons](#), [Systems and Communications Commons](#), and the [Systems Engineering and Multidisciplinary Design Optimization Commons](#)

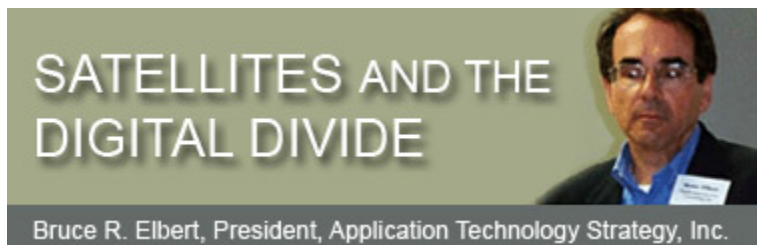
Recommended Citation

Elbert, Bruce (2021) "Issue 5: From the Guest Editor," *Online Journal of Space Communication*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 5 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://ohioopen.library.ohio.edu/spacejournal/vol2/iss5/1>

This Front Matter is brought to you for free and open access by the OHIO Open Library Journals at OHIO Open Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Online Journal of Space Communication by an authorized editor of OHIO Open Library. For more information, please contact deborded@ohio.edu.

Issue 5: From the Guest Editor



Our 21st Century global economy has its strengths and weaknesses. Positively speaking, we have the technology and know-how to do almost anything. Limitations are primarily in terms of economics, politics, societal factors, and education.

This issue of the Online Journal of Space Communication focuses on a matter of social concern for which satellite technology is well-positioned to help overcome traditional communication limitations of terrain and distance. Literally the entire globe is within the reach of one satellite system or another, making it possible to extend telephone, television, radio, data and Internet communications to every corner and everybody.

What Is the Digital Divide, Really?

As editor of this issue on social impact of space communication, I have taken a broad view of the Digital Divide. Our first impression might be that the Digital Divide is purely, as former US President Lyndon B. Johnson would have said it, a case of the "haves" and the "have nots." Surely, economics plays a role and there is the argument for generosity on the part of the "haves." However, there remains the question of which "have nots" can most benefit from a crossing of the Digital Divide? Likewise, how best can the Divide be crossed in the pursuit of those communication benefits that the Internet and digital communications may deliver? One person cannot answer these questions as they demand the attention of people and organizations in three corners: those who need the services, those that provide the services, and those that facilitate the coming together of the previous two parties. Many of the answers lie within the writings and experiences posted to this journal.

One area upon which we can agree is the importance of improving the delivery of education to have-not areas - to meet minimum literacy needs as well as to provide more advanced educational opportunities. The objective of The Commonwealth of Learning is particularly relevant:

"Recognizing knowledge as key to cultural, social and economic development, The Commonwealth of Learning is committed to assisting Commonwealth member governments to take full advantage of open, distance and technology-

mediated learning strategies to provide increased and equitable access to education and training for all their citizens."

That the 54-member Commonwealth would take this on is important, yet it rests on the common ground of the English language. Taking this a step further to the literally hundreds of other distinct languages on this planet is perhaps the next challenge after the Internet is extended across the Digital Divide.

Selection of Authors and Subjects

The papers contributed for this issue come from professionals who deal with the effects of the Digital Divide almost on a daily basis and from researchers in academia who recognize the importance of improving educational opportunities and information access in disadvantaged areas. In many cases, the concepts and examples offered come from personal experience, making them particularly vital. Our idea is to illustrate for you, the reader, the several forms the Digital Divide takes, to show some ways the Digital Divide has been crossed, and suggest what can be done to further promote good digital communications for peoples in need. Each of these examples point to the benefits of making better communications more readily available.

Why Satellites Are Appropriate

The global satellite industry is poised to meet the challenges of two-way interactive broadband communication via satellite using C and Ku band GEO satellites, and the hoped for new generation of Ka band satellite systems. For these developments to help bridge the Digital Divide the industry will need to weather the costs and multiple roadblocks. Among the roadblocks are unfavorable regulatory environments that view two-way small earth stations as a potential threat to incumbent terrestrial operators in many regions of the world. Inmarsat faced this particular barrier and has overcome it only through years of diligent lobbying and ground work. The task is not impossible, but requires global effort.

Millions of people are currently well served with the satellites and terminal equipment in active use. Extending this infrastructure to people in need is the subject of this issue.

Contributions By Authors

Our contributing authors face the Digital Divide from different perspectives. Examples include CNN International News Editor [Eli Flourney](#), who takes us into the field during recent conflicts and describes how his organization gathers news and reports it to the world; and [Saleh Gunawan](#) and [Johanes Indri Prijatmodjo](#) at Satelindo, who describe the development of the Palapa Satellite System and show how it is used to make Internet services available to island inhabitants throughout Indonesia. [Phillip Spector](#), noted telecommunication lawyer and satellite expert,

discusses the US scene and suggests ways the FCC can further the cause of better access.

Crossing the Digital Divide using satellites has its many proponents and challenges. Jeffrey Roberts of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints talks about the Church's extensive digital satellite network that brings members together from remote islands in the Pacific and from villages in Africa. Andy Hope describes a "day in the life" of an expat satellite installer in Africa who brings digital satellite communications to the interior. Similarly, [Vince Waterson](#), who runs a digital satellite teleport on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, explains how to overcome the problems of getting satellite Internet services up and running.

Policy perspectives are not ignored in this issue. Kei Hata, former member of the Japanese Diet, describes the steps she thinks Japan should take to make the Internet available to all on an equal basis. [David Hartshorn](#) of the Global VSAT Forum updates us on the progress satellite providers are making in gaining access to previously-closed markets. In contrast, [Bill Stowe](#) of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, surprises us that the Digital Divide exists within U.S. cities. He discusses a simple way for less-advantaged members of the community to have their say even if they don't have computers. [Virgil Labrador](#) of SatNews and SatMagazine discusses the divide that exists between the commercial and the non-commercial sectors. Better cooperation would insure leaps forward as opposed to baby steps, he says.

In terms of educational opportunities, [Robin Latio](#) of the Sudan argues strongly that satellite-delivered video education is a vital need in East-African villages, and [Shoko Mikawa](#) of Keio University and [Jun Takei](#) of JSAT Corporation tell a success story in Asia whereby the SOIASIA project provides higher-education programs through a virtual university. Distance education is the subject of a well-researched paper by [Hsin-Ho Tsao](#), a Masters student in Communication & Development Studies who discusses alternative ways of using satellite technology to reach students who are dispersed.

[Shuho Otani](#), an Ohio University graduate student from Japan, looks at the several definitions of the Digital Divide and describes why Japan is a special case. The paper is also valuable for its in-depth review of the academic press regarding the general topic of the Digital Divide. Mongolia, the land of a proud people and the origin of the Pony Express, is covered in a fascinating article by [Undrahbuyan Basaanjav](#). As her first written contribution to the Journal (Undrah is its webmaster), she assesses the Internet on the Gobi Desert. The learned technical paper by [Dr. Shaul Laufer](#) of Shiron Satellite Communications provides tools for scoping out a satellite data project.

The contributions included are a sampling of the breadth of the Digital Divide. A reading of several of these papers will expand one's awareness of the topic and provide useful ideas. As Guest Editor, I have chosen to edit for clarity but not

rewrite these contributions. As a result, you will read them in the personal words - and personal styles - of each contributor. From this effort, we hope that better understanding and some progress, no matter how small, will result.

[Bruce R. Elbert](#), President
Application Technology Strategy, Inc.
3202 Cove Creek Court
Thousand Oaks, CA 91362
Tel: +1 805 531-9692
Fax: +1 805 531-9692
Email: bruce@applicationstrategy.com
Web: <http://www.applicationstrategy.com/>