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Profile of Marcia Smith

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Marcia Smith is President of the Space and Technology Policy Group, LLC, which specializes in news, information and analysis of civil, military and commercial space programs and other technology areas.

From March 2006-March 2009, Ms. Smith was Director of the Space Studies Board (SSB) at the National Research Council (NRC), and from January 2007-March 2009 additionally was Director of the NRC's Aeronautics and Space Engineering Board (ASEB). The NRC is the operating arm of The National Academies, which is comprised of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine. The National Academies are a non-profit organization that provides advice to the nation on science, engineering and medicine [www.nationalacademies.org].

Previously, Ms. Smith was a specialist in aerospace and telecommunications policy at the Congressional Research Service (CRS), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. CRS provides objective, non-partisan research and analysis exclusively for the Members and committees of the U.S. Congress. Ms. Smith specialized in U.S. and foreign military and civilian space activities, as well as on telecommunications issues (including the Internet). She worked at CRS from 1975-2006, except for a one year leave of absence from 1985-1986 while she served as Executive Director of the U.S. National Commission on Space. The Commission, created by Congress and its members appointed by the President, developed long term (50 year) goals for the civilian space program under the chairmanship of (the late) former NASA Administrator Thomas Paine. The Commission published its results in the report Pioneering the Space Frontier (Bantam Books).

A graduate of Syracuse University, Ms. Smith is the author or co-author of more than 220 reports and articles on space, nuclear energy, and telecommunications and Internet issues. Prior to joining CRS in 1975, she worked in the Washington office of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. Ms. Smith is the North American Editor of the quarterly journal Space Policy. She is a Fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA). She is a member of AIAA's International Activities Committee, and served on its Honors and Awards Committee (2002-2008), Ethical Conduct Panel (1997-1999, chairman in 1999); International Space Year Committee (1989-1992), Public Policy Committee (1982-1989) and Space Systems Technical Committee (1986-1989); was an AIAA Distinguished Lecturer (1983-1988); and was a member of the Council of AIAA's National Capital Section (1994-1996).

Ms. Smith is a Fellow of the American Astronautical Society, and co-chaired its Fellows Committee (2004). She was AAS President (1985-1986), on its Board of Directors (1982-1985), and Executive Committee (1982-1987, 1988-1989). She was awarded the AAS "John F. Kennedy Astronautics Award" in 2006. She is an Emeritus Member of Women in Aerospace (WIA). She was a founder of WIA, its President (1987), a member of its Board of Directors (1984-1990), and was

awarded its "Lifetime Achievement Award" in 2003. She is a Fellow of the British Interplanetary Society. She is a member of the International Institute of Space Law (Vice President 2003-2006, Board of Directors 1996-2003). She is a member of the International Academy of Astronautics, was a Trustee (1995-2001), and was co-chair of its Space Activities and Society Committee (1991-1997). She is a Life Member of the New York Academy of Sciences, the Washington Academy of Sciences (Board of Directors, 1988-1989), and Sigma Xi (the honorary scientific research society). She is a member of the Advisory Committee for the Secure World Foundation. She was a member of the Board of Directors of the Challenger Center for Space Science Education (2000-2003).

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1) How did you get started in the satellite business?

I've spent 37 years in the space policy business. Many of those years, 31 in fact, I was at the Congressional Research Service on Capitol Hill, helping members and committees of Congress understand the issues associated with passing various laws about the space program. CRS' motto is that it "informs the debate." It is not chartered to make recommendations, but to illuminate the issues and provide an analysis of various alternatives to assist Members in deciding what they want to do. My entry into space policy was pure serendipity that involved a friend arranging for me to meet John Logsdon, then as now the "dean" of space policy in Washington D.C., as I was graduating from Syracuse University. I came to Washington and worked for John for a few months and then moved over to the Washington Office of American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), which was headquartered in New York at the time. That provided me with wonderful opportunities to expand my skills and contacts and I ended up at CRS in 1975 and fell in love with the policy side of science and technology. I've been doing it ever since.

2) How have you been involved in changes brought about in or by this business (innovations, technologies, services)?

My involvement has been from the congressional policy perspective. I did quite a bit of work for the relevant members of Congress and congressional committees when they were debating whether to let COMSAT get into the commercial remote sensing business; when they debated whether to fund NASA's ACTS program; during the debate over the ORBIT Act that privatized COMSAT, INTELSAT and INMARSAT; and over the 5-year revisions to the Satellite Home Viewer Act that regulates direct broadcast satellite reception. Since CRS does not take positions on issues I can't say that I changed anything, but I hope that I provided context and analysis that the Congress found useful.

3) What do you see happening in the next five years in this industry?

For the sake of brevity, I will comment only on three segments of the satellite industry: communications, remote sensing, and navigation and timing.

The communications satellite industry continues to face the challenges of competing with terrestrial networks. While the demand for bandwidth seems insatiable, those in this market will have to continue to demonstrate the advantages of using satellites. Business seems good now, but satellite operators will have to demonstrate constantly the advantages of satellite communications despite launch and on-orbit failures. They also must address emerging issues such as space debris. The Iridium-Cosmos collision focused attention on Space Situational Awareness and the need for governments and the satellite industry to work more closely together to ensure that everyone knows, at a minimum, where everything in orbit is - particularly satellites that are capable of maneuvering out of harm's way.

The commercial remote sensing satellite industry probably will remain focused on government needs, despite commercial applications like GoogleEarth, but since the government recognizes that it needs the commercial operators, this segment of the industry seems relatively secure.

Navigation/timing should continue to be a blockbuster hit from the commercial perspective, but DOD needs to get control of the GPS IIF program and prove that GPS IIIA won't suffer the same problems. Knowing that society across the world can't live without GPS anymore, though, the program seems secure no matter what.

4) What advice do you have for women interested in entering the industry?

Be flexible. And in the words of my friend Mike Griffin, "get a job that you love and you'll never work a day in your life."