

LANDSAT DATA CONTINUITY THROUGH THE 1990'S

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ABSTRACT

In the mid-1970s the remote sensing user community was concerned about the continued availability of remote sensing data from space. This concern was centered around the issue of sustained U.S. government support for future Landsat missions. To a lesser extent during this same period, users were concerned about the stability of a computer compatible tape (CCT) format. Although during this period CCT use was subordinate to photographic hard copy, the tape format had been modified by the government at frequent intervals and was an issue to digital data users.

By the mid-1980s the issue of data availability from space had lessened in importance. The Landsat system was joined by operational remote sensing missions sponsored by the French, Japanese, and Indians. All these systems were capable of delivering high quality digital data. The meaning of data continuity was now more directed to the continuity of data format. It was obvious by the close of the decade that data availability was no longer the issue that it had been ten years earlier. Utilization of digital data had increased. Personal computers were common tools in the work place, and many had image processing capabilities far exceeding those available in the 1970s. The user community concern was now directed toward the stability of data formats.

The list of potential remote sensing missions operating by the mid-1990s should completely negate the issue of continued data availability. The real issue in the 1990s will revolve around the users ability to integrate the different data types delivered by these various remote sensing missions. This issue will become more important as concern about the global environment heightens. Remote sensing systems, continue to become more important to the study of the global environment because they provide the only source of timely, quantifiable data.

By the mid-1990s remote sensing data will be available from a variety of active and passive sensor systems, operated by governments and private industry. The users community will be faced with multiple data types and formats. The users community will be faced with multiple data types and formats. Today's conventional wisdom about data formats seeks to include all possible data into a 'single' archive format. However, these single archive formats are counter productive for customers wanting to quickly extract information from the data. EOSAT has selected a simple to use data format that permits the customer to rapidly access and begin to process the data. The new "Fast Format" should be just as acceptable to the data archivist, because there are no expansive, difficult to interpret header records to maintain.

EOSAT believes that the commercial data users will demand products that are easy to access. Current remote sensing data formats are cumbersome and inefficient from the users perspective. International committees which recommend data formats are motivated by archiving objectives which are not necessarily compatible with data users requirements. These bodies do not represent a commercial interest and over the long term do not represent the data users best interests. This paper will discuss EOSAT's plans for the future and its plans to introduce new digital products.