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IGARSS '86

Remote Sensing
Today's Solutions for Tomorrow's Information Needs

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WELCOME TO IGARSS '86

David Landgrebe

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1986

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IGARSS '86

Since its inception only a few years ago, IGARSS has grown in stature to become one of the world's foremost symposia in the field of remote sensing and the geosciences. This year's program insures that our meeting will again measure up to the high, which have now become the tradition that is IGARSS.

It would appear that the field in which we work is moving toward even more exciting times that we have seen in the past. In the U.S., in Europe, in the Far East, wherever one looks, engineering and scientific groups and technical agencies of all kinds, working with related government agencies, can be found planning forward-looking new space-related activities for the future. New instruments with enormous information-gathering abilities are being planned to provide data from all parts of the spectrum. New data processing and storage hardware, combined with fundamental advances in information systems concepts and algorithms are flowing toward us, awaiting our research efforts to mold them to our special use. Seldom in our history have programs of such magnitude, breadth, and especially of such duration been planned.

It has been noted that we are the first generation of humankind to be able to see the whole Earth. It may be this perception steadily permeating through our various communities that has moved our society to turn its engineering and scientific talent so broadly toward seeing what we can learn about the Earth and how we can improve humankind's interface with its natural systems. As we continue to move into this period of enhanced study of the Earth, it is clear that this IGARSS and those of the future are important milestones in this thrust, where we can collectively learn what progress each of us has made. It is my wish thus that you have a most productive and enjoyable stay here in Zurich.

The general theme of this year's symposium "REMOTE SENSING - TODAYS SOLUTIONS FOR TOMORROWS INFORMATION NEEDS" intents to highlight the possibilities and potentials of remote sensing systems and techniques to expand our knowledge of the earth and man's impact on its habitability. But to make real progress we have to redirect our scientific efforts. We have to apply the scientific knowledge and techniques now available to us. We have to see that scientific information becomes an integrated part of public decision making. We have many answers, but we don't apply them properly.

The future of remote sensing in Europe looks exciting and promising. Hardware and data processing techniques are widely available today. However, we still need to develop complete systems which really serve the users. We still have to transfer the technology to the operational stage, where it can make a real contribution in solving the urgent needs of mankind. Consequently, more attention should be focussed on the applications in all fields of natural and human sciences, on setting up truly operational systems and on providing the information necessary for the future. - To date, progress in remote sensing has been achieved primarily through technical development. Main emphasis has been placed on the techniques rather than on their use. But the main thrust should be user requirements and the provision of pertinent information, to make remote sensing a distinguished problem solving discipline.

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