



“Satellite image of the week”: an Internet-based educational series for increase the public awareness for natural hazards – a case history from Hungary

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Public acceptance of new technologies is easiest to achieve, if young people become familiar with it. Some members of our space research group therefore started a project in the mid-1990s to offer presentations on satellite imagery in secondary schools tailored according to the needs of the pupils. Despite the no-cost option for the schools this solution was not found to be effective. Later, owing to the installation of the satellite receiving station of the Eötvös University, Budapest, in Oct 2002, and its upgrade to receive the MODIS data, in Sep 2004 producing a wealth of satellite data, we decided to disseminate this information for a wider audience via the Internet. Since the spatial coverage includes the whole Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia and northern Africa, even a small part of Greenland, a lot of interesting scenarios can be demonstrated including e.g., volcano eruptions, devastating floods and forest fires.

Based on this data source, we published over 500 short popular scientific articles on different Hungarian-language internet portals (Origo, National Geographic Hungary and Űrvilág [*Space World*] in Hungary, and the Transindex in Romania) mostly under the common title “Satellite image of the week”. Many of these articles deal with natural disasters and hazards – floods, flood-danger because of snow cover, wildfires, severe storms, leafbite of insects, and man-made disasters e.g. large oil depot explosions. The short articles have always an explanatory part and the remote sensing instrument

is also briefly mentioned.

The articles have become soon popular. The special interest of the public – and therefore the portals – is even more increased when the images show disasters rather than just a nice landscape, especially when the event occurred around Hungary. The series achieved electronic media publicity as well. As a consequence, after a couple of months of operation when a news came about some disaster, a part of the Hungarian-speaking internet users expected to see it in satellite images, too. Recognizing this demand, a satellite-imagery-based real-time disaster monitoring system is about to be implemented for public use by the Eötvös University and the Aeronet Ltd. with governmental financial support. Besides, the series has remarkable popularity among the pupils in secondary schools and resulted in an increase in the number of applicants to our university courses.

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