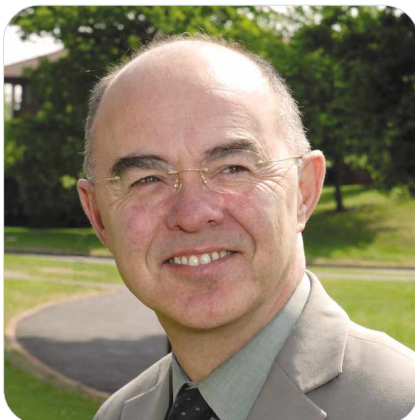




Photo courtesy of SSTL.

## Realising the potential

Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd (SSTL) was formed in 1985 by the University of Surrey. Since its formation, the research and development company has become a world leader in the design and manufacture of high performance small satellites. The company was acquired by EADS Astrium in April 2008. Helen Jameson speaks to Professor Sir Martin Sweeting, Chairman of SSTL about the acquisition, SSTL's work and the space industry in the UK.



**Question: SSTL's acquisition by EADS Astrium nods at growth on many different levels. What are your expansion plans?**

**Professor Sir Martin Sweeting:** Yes, the acquisition will enable SSTL to expand significantly and we see this expansion in three main directions:

- commercial - being able to secure larger constellation contracts;
- geographic - for example we have now established US subsidiary companies (SSTL-USA) to have greater access to that market; and
- technological - we are expanding our product range to include a new

geostationary satellite platform, SAR remote sensing and an interplanetary lunar satellite. We plan to expand our facilities to match this growth.

**Question: SSTL has experienced great success and has a superb reputation within the satellite industry. What is behind this success?**

**Professor Sir Martin Sweeting:** The key has been the innovative (but knowledgeable) use of commercial-off-the-shelf technologies using modern manufacturing techniques combined with a management approach that is more akin to the modern IT industry rather than the heritage military-industrial industry



commonly used for traditional space projects.

**Question: When do you expect the EADS acquisition go through once approved by the relevant agencies?**

**Professor Sir Martin Sweeting:** The University of Surrey (the present shareholder) has exchanged contracts with EADS-ASTRIUM, however completion of the sale has to wait for regulatory approval from the European Commission - this will take at least several months, but the acquisition will be completed rapidly once this approval is granted.

**Question: What was behind the decision to sell? There are many benefits of being a smaller research and development company. Do you think that any of these benefits may be lost by going commercial?**

**Professor Sir Martin Sweeting:** SSTL has been growing at about 20 percent year-on-year and the University has realised for some time that it would not be in a position to support financially the full commercial potential of the Company and so plans for a sale have been in preparation for several years. The sale will both provide the financial backing that SSTL needs to achieve its potential in the small satellite market and also allow the University to realise its 23-year investment in SSTL and use the funds released to support its educational objectives - including growth of the academic satellite engineering research activities in the University's Surrey Space Centre, which focuses on long-term innovation in space engineering and small satellites.

SSTL has been operating as fully commercial company at 'arms-length' from the University for the last 10 years - so we don't see much day-to-day change.

**Question: Will SSTL remain at the same premises or will there be re-location involved?**

**Professor Sir Martin Sweeting:** SSTL will remain on the Surrey Research Park and indeed is likely to expand its premises there - it will also continue to work closely with the Surrey Space Centre. No relocation is being considered or planned as the intention is to build SSTL & SSC as a commercial and academic 'space innovation hub' in Guildford.

**Question: The Giove-A mission was recently declared a success. Congratulations. The Galileo programme has been fraught with problems but Giove-B has now been launched. Do you see ultimate success of Galileo despite the problems it has faced?**

**Professor Sir Martin Sweeting:** Thank you - GIOVE-A recently completed its nominal mission lifetime but, as it is still performing excellently in orbit, operations are expected

to continue for ESA for another year at least. GIOVE-B has recently been launched and is working well in orbit with a highly stable clock. The combined GIOVE-A&B missions have now demonstrated the technical feasibility of a European navigation system. The EC recently opened up Galileo for increased competition and SSTL are teaming with OHB System (Germany) to offer a second source of (lower cost) satellites based upon the GIOVE-A experience (which was completed on-time and within budget). I believe that the success of the Galileo system will best be finally secured by introducing an early service option (which has been proposed by SSTL to ESA & EC) based on slightly simpler and far lower cost satellites - which could then be augmented by more complex satellites on a longer schedule.

**Question: How do you see the UK space industry at present? The UK is certainly a great innovator but what do you believe is the future of the UK space industry? Can we compete with the 'big boys' of space?**

**Professor Sir Martin Sweeting:** The UK space industry is strong and growing - the "Case for Space" published by the UK space industry association (UKSPACE) last year identified its economic contribution per capita to the UK economy as second only to the oil/gas extraction industry. The UK has a history of innovation in small in satellites space (eg. SSTL, DMC) and innovative communications services (eg. Paradigm, AVANTI, INMARSAT) and, providing there is continued seed corn funding support from HMG and academic research funded through

the UK Research Councils, the UK can continue to 'punch above its weight' in both the commercial and scientific sectors of space. The UK should not aim to compete across the board with the 'big boys' of space but rather focus on our specialist expertise to contribute key elements of larger space enterprises - such as communications services, small remote sensing satellites, space science and robotic exploration of the Moon & Mars. The UK, and especially SSTL, has a long history of international collaboration in space.

**Question: What are SSTL's aims and objectives for the rest of 2008 and going forward into 2009?**

**Professor Sir Martin Sweeting:** Our first task is to complete and then exploit the benefits of the acquisition of SSTL by EADS-ASTRIUM. SSTL will remain a firmly independent company and retain its existing brand and, processes and approach - it will be able to compete with sister Astrium companies but will also look for synergies in both business and technologies when appropriate. SSTL currently has 14 satellites being built and prepared for launch - seven of which are scheduled for launch in 2008 (including five RapidEye satellites). We shall also be busy setting up our new US subsidiary.

In 2009 we shall be looking to secure our first geostationary communications satellite contract, initiate a SAR remote sensing satellite and a lunar orbiting satellite carrying communications, navigation and science payloads. With the support of a new (wealthier) owner, we expect SSTL to supply larger constellations of LEO satellites. ●

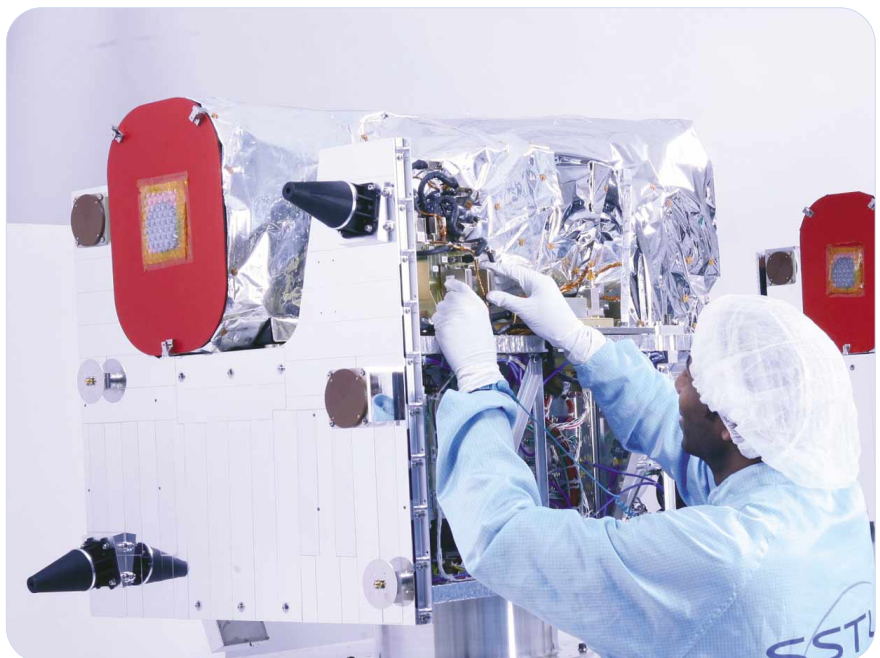


Photo courtesy of SSTL.