



Too much information?

In this issue of Satellite Evolution Asia I have asked myself quite a lot of questions about the direction in which technology is taking us. This time around I have been looking at tracking and telemetry. I am in no doubt that the use of GPS technology and soon Galileo, and a renovated GLONASS system, will help in many different ways with location-based services. It is fantastic that there is GPS technology now involved in the emergency services, first responders, law enforcement agencies and also to help industry become more efficient.

However, over the past ten to fifteen years, since the advent of the mobile phone, we have become more and more obsessed with knowing where people are at any given time. It's the one question you're almost guaranteed to be asked when you answer your mobile phone call – "where are you?" However, now location based technology can give you that answer before you have even dialled the number. It's called social mapping and it is going to be a very big thing, especially for the younger ones among us. It seems to be very intrusive at first but in fact this can help put parent's minds at rest. At least they can obtain a device that can determine where their children are at any one time. It also can be very beneficial if an elderly person with a condition such as alzheimers gets lost or is in danger. They can be monitored closely.

Businesses are making big gains from location-based services. Fleet management, fuel reduction, tracking of employees – it all helps them to become much more efficient. In addition, these services also can be used for more advanced marketing purposes such as alerting the user to where the nearest coffee shop is or the nearest music shop, hoping to attract people to their businesses.

Satellite based services used for location purposes are vital in terms of disaster recovery, in business and for law enforcement and also for the average Joe who has to contend with the trials of the traffic jam day in, day out but I sometimes question whether they are really absolutely necessary. Technology such as this has become a great enabler but can also smother us and sometimes make us feel like we lose our independence.

It seems that location-based services are soon to become part of the whole mobile phone package and I think that this has both pros and cons attached to it. In a world where it seems that big brother is already watching you, do we really need to constantly be monitoring one another? Just a thought. ■

Helen Jameson
Editor

