

# Foreword

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Marta Macias Brown

I am sure that my late husband, George E. Brown, Jr., would have enjoyed reading and discussing this book. Those who knew George knew that he had a deep interest in the potential uses of space-based remote sensing, as well as a strong conviction that remote sensing could play a constructive role in preserving peace in the world and improving the quality of life of the world's citizens. It was that conviction that drove his efforts in Congress to promote the development of both public- and private-sector remote sensing systems, and in particular the Landsat system.

During his 35 years in the House of Representatives, George probably did more than any single Member of Congress to nurture and sustain the Federal government's investment in civilian land remote sensing technology and applications. He recognized the unique benefits that the Landsat system had delivered in terms of increased understanding of the Earth's surface, creation of a plethora of new applications to benefit both the private and public sectors, development of a user community conversant in the uses of remote sensing data, and promotion of international collaboration and data sharing.

Given all of those benefits, George believed it to be self-evident that the Landsat system should be put on a stable institutional and financial footing, and the turbulence that buffeted the program during the 1980s and 1990s was a source of some anguish for him. Never one to sit idly by in such a situation,

he introduced legislation that eventually was enacted as the Land Remote Sensing Policy Act of 1992. It was a comprehensive approach that addressed all of the major issues confronting the Landsat program: management, funding, spacecraft options, and data policy. I know that George would be pleased to see his efforts bearing fruit in the spectacular success of the Landsat 7 spacecraft, which has been producing high-quality Earth observation images since its launch in April 1999.

The Land Remote Sensing Policy Act of 1992 was notable in another respect—it clearly recognized the potential benefits that could flow from the emergence of a commercially viable remote sensing industry, and it codified in law a set of procedures for the licensing and operation of such commercial systems. While the commercial remote sensing industry has suffered from a variety of “growing pains” over the past decade—including the challenges we still face in getting payloads successfully deployed into orbit—it appears that private-sector systems are here to stay. George recognized that the development of commercial remote sensing systems inevitably would lead to a whole host of policy issues that would have to be addressed, including the implications of growing global transparency. I know that he would have looked forward to reading and debating the analyses of those issues that are contained in this book.

Of course, his colleagues knew that George brought his own core values to such debates. In the area of remote sensing, one of those core values was his belief in an open society. He strongly believed that such openness contributed to peace and freedom both at home and around the world, and he was a steadfast opponent of what he considered to be arbitrary over-classification and secrecy dictates. It was his view that attempts to block the dissemination of civil and commercial remote sensing imagery were ultimately doomed to failure as the capabilities for producing such imagery spread around the globe, and that rather than threatening the security of the nation, openness would ultimately enhance it.

In closing, I would like to express my appreciation to the authors of this book for their decision to dedicate it to the memory of my husband, George E. Brown, Jr. He loved a good book and a thoughtful analysis, and I know that he would have found both in this volume.