

# SATELLITE FOOTPRINT

Marc Neil Siskin  
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Welcome to my second column about satellites. Since I wrote the last article a new service has appeared in the skies, and I describe it briefly below. Next I provide the promised list of print sources for satellite programming. Finally the column ends with a guest contribution. In response to my request for reviews of services, Victor Aulestia from the University of Maryland—Baltimore County was kind enough to provide us with a review of Europlus, the Direct-to-Home service from Italy and Germany.

Before I give you Victor's review I want to let you know about a new satellite service in the U.S. with programming direct from Portugal. RTPi (Rádiatelevisão Portuguesa Internacional) is on U.S. Domestic satellite Galaxy 3, Transponder 5, and as of March 1st is scrambled with Videocipher 2, the consumer scrambling method. Their programming includes shows for children, sports, news, Soap Operas, features and documentaries. For more information about RTPi contact Mr. Helder Costa-Rita at Henda Communications, 10 Durfe Street, Fall River, MA 02722 or call (800) 959-4597 or (508) 674-4535.

In my last column I promised to give you some of the more conventional sources of

information I have found useful for learning what is available on satellite. The most current sources of information are electronic. However, if you are not on the network, I suggest the following magazines and books.

First, there are materials that primarily address satellite users. *OnSat* and its sister publication *OnSat Canada* are weeklies with listings of satellite programming and information about new services and changes in service location. In the U.S. contact Triple D Publishing, P.O. Box 2347, Shelby, NC 28151. In Canada contact Triple D at 9780 Bramley Road, Suite 406, Brampton, Ontario, Canada L6S 2P1.

*Satellite Learning Program and Resource Guide* is a quarterly publication that gives listings of educational programming in many disciplines ranging from agriculture to Virginia's hospital network. The *Guide* arrives in a looseleaf binder for convenient updating. For subscription information contact EnterACT Corporation, 1837 Algoa Friendswood Road, Alvin, TX 77511.

Marc Siskin is Senior Media Designer for the Language Resource Center at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

For the person who is operating your satellite dish the following three publications are extremely useful. The first, the *Westsat Guide*, is a complete, updated guide to all domestic satellites with listings of video and audio services, satellite locations and frequencies. To get a subscription to this (usually) bi-monthly magazine contact WestSat Communications, P.O. Box 434, Pleasanton, CA 94566.

The other two publications are the *World Satellite Almanac* and the *World Satellite Annual*. Combined, they form an accurate and complete guide to the entire world's satellite capability. They are geared in large part to long-term users and to those people who want to know about the technical capabilities of satellites, such as how much power they have and where their footprint lands. However, there are articles for the beginning user also. The *Annual* covers any changes that have occurred to satellites over the course of the past year and announces any changes that are scheduled for the future. Both of these books are available from MLE, Inc., Box 159, Winter Beach, FL 32971.

There will be no satellite column in the Fall issue of the *IALL Journal*, but look for one again in the Winter issue. I will be writing about European and Asian satellite signals, and I hope to have reviews of more services. If you have information you wish to share, or spot a mistake, please let me know. My address is at the end of this column.

When he posted a message on the LLTI mailing list about his first experiences with the Europlus service, I asked Victor Aulestia of the University of Maryland-Baltimore County's Instructional Technology Office to write about the experience for this column. Here is his review.

## **Europlus Satellite System**

**by Victor Aulestia**

**University of Maryland,  
Baltimore County**

This is a review of the technological aspects of the Europlus Network; it is not intended to review the quality or the content of the programming available on this system.

The Europlus System is a Direct-to-Home (also referred to as Direct Broadcast by Satellite, DBS) satellite delivery system. DBS is a system that has been used for many years in Europe for the distribution of numerous channels of television and radio directly to the consumer, effectively eliminating the need for local cable services.

Recently, Europlus, a Geneva-based company, saw the marketing possibilities for the distribution of European television programs directly to the many European immigrant groups living in the Americas. This plan was made possible by the launching of Intelsat K, a high-powered satellite, by Intelsat.

Basically, Europlus uplinks its television and radio broadcasts from Rome to Intelsat K. The high-gain antennas of this satellite are directed to North and South America. The footprint covers the Eastern U.S. up to approximately 50 miles west of the Mississippi (roughly 95 degrees west latitude), an equivalent area in Canada, and nearly all of South and Central America. Signals from the satellite are received—not by a 5- or 10-meter (16- to 33-foot) diameter dish—but by an 80-cm (approximately 30-inch) parabolic satellite antenna located at the home of the subscriber. In technological terms, this system is indeed revolutionary.

The individual consumer is now connected directly with Europe without going through the cable company or the national PTT (Post, Telegraph and Telephone) organization. Strangely, the United States does not have this capability. The FCC has recently approved the construction and launch of Direct-to-Home satellites. These systems will be operational in three to four years.

I learned of the existence of Europlus through several email messages I received via Dartmouth's LLTI listserver. The senders were inquiring about a brochure they had received from a New Jersey-based company that offers Italian television direct from Europe to language departments. Frank Ryan, from Brown University, was kind enough to fax me the details. After reading the brochure, I was very intrigued and at the same time doubtful of the capabilities claimed by Europlus. However, since we at UMBC like to experiment with satellite technology and the price for the complete system was relatively low (\$840), we purchased a system.

The system promptly arrived in two small packages. I looked at the contents and my doubts increased by a factor of 10. I asked myself how it is possible to receive satellite television directly from Europe with this toy-sized dish and a receiver that weighs less than 1/4 pound and has no external controls or LCD readouts.

The system came with a mounting bracket. The installation was very simple and so was the process of aiming and adjusting the dish. The surprising thing was that after finding Intelsat K and aiming the dish to the correct azimuth and elevation, we received a signal so strong that it peaked above the limit of the signal meter contained in the receiver. No more doubts. The system works as advertised.

What kind of programming is available from Europlus? There are two television channels currently available. The first is RAI, which provides programming from three of its channels in Italy. RAI supplies news and information, a daily sports magazine, live soccer, Italian feature films and other entertainment programs. The second is Teleplus Deutschland, which provides programming produced by Deutsche Welle (DW), including news, documentaries, entertainment and sports.

In addition to the video signals, you can view Teletext (an electronic bulletin board which provides information on news, sports, weather, the market, music, etc., in French, German, Italian and English) with live, updated textual information via the RAI databank. Also available is Italian radio. Currently, Europlus provides 24 hours a day of contemporary and classical Italian music.

The system has the capability of delivering Pay-per-View programming, but this feature has not been used as yet. A Europlus Club Card will be available sometime in 1993. This card will allow the subscriber to access special programming and confidential messages addressed to the holder of the card.

From the technical point of view, I am very happy with the quality of the picture and sound and the Teletext capabilities. From the point of view of programming, personally I think we should be thankful that we are able to receive German and Italian language programming, considering the fact that in the past this type of programming was almost non-existent in the United States. At UMBC the students enjoy watching DW and RAI in their rooms and the Multimedia Center.

The time of experimentation with this system was over in less than a week. The

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system is so simple to install and operate that it has become a regular feature in our university cable system. The faculty and students of German are happy to have their own television channel.

The Europlus distributor in the USA is S&D Video, Inc., PO Box 374, 10 Park Place, Butler, NJ 07405-0374. Their phone number is (201) 492-2300.

*Victor Aulestia is Director of Instructional Technology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. His email address is: OIT0001@UMBCADMN.BITNET.*

*Contributions/suggestions for the "Satellite Footprint" column may be sent directly to Marc Siskin. Mailing address: Language Resource Center, 2015 Modern Language Building, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1275; phone: (313) 764-0424 (8 A.M. – 4:30 P.M. EST); email: marc-siskin@umich.edu, or USERLF9K@UMICHUM.BITNET*