

DAVID BRANDT-ERICHSEN: GETTING THE WORD OUT WORLDWIDE

BY AL GLOBUS AND NSS STAFF

“Getting the word out” is what motivates David Brandt-Erichsen to volunteer hundreds of hours of his time to the National Space Society. Almost single-handedly, David has created an online library of information for the NSS Web site consisting of over 20,000 pages, including by far the largest and most important collection of material on space settlement and space solar power on the web (www.nss.org/library). He is dedicated to making this library of information easily accessible to anyone in the world.

David’s interest in science and space has all the appearances of being genetic. He grew up in the small Danish village of Solvang, California, where his interests were not enthusiastically shared by others. At age eight he was thrilled by the Walt Disney “Man in Space” TV mini-series, at age nine by the movie *Forbidden Planet* (still his favorite movie of all time), and at age thirteen he was inspired by Arthur C. Clarke’s book *The Exploration of Space*.

David was in college during the first Apollo moon landing, and ever since has considered July 20, 1969 the most important date in world history. He believes it should be the starting date for a new calendar. “I always felt that I had been born too early, before humanity had grown up, and that the Apollo moon landings were the first baby steps in that process,” David revealed in an interview. But he didn’t think he had a talent for space science, and he didn’t know of a way to personally participate. After college, he did research lab work in molecular biology, where his meticulous attention to detail allowed him to find solid reproducible results.

Then one day in 1977, while browsing in a bookstore, he noticed the title *Colonies in Space* by T. A. Heppenheimer. He almost passed it over, assuming it was about the far-distant future without any relevant or innovative material. “The first chapter was pretty standard stuff, but when I read chapter two, I was totally thunderstruck,” David told NSS. The book, based on the work of Gerard K. O’Neill, contained radically new ideas of historic importance. It was nothing less than a detailed, technically sound, and economically feasible plan to colonize space right now (30 years ago!). He said he instantly knew that this was the path he wanted the human race to take, and that he somehow had to be involved. But how?

Colonies in Space had a footnote in the back about an organization called the L5 Society, which was formed to promote the idea. He immediately joined and began a chapter in his local San Francisco Bay Area.



This was the start of David’s 30-year involvement in the space movement. In 1979, he took a job at Oregon State University and started an L5 chapter there. The following year, he rose in the ranks of the national organization and became national phone tree coordinator for the lobbying effort to obtain funding for solar power satellites.

A couple of years later, David ended up in Tucson where he volunteered at the L5 Society headquarters as treasurer and bookkeeper. When the L5 Society merged with

Artist Mark Maxwell’s vision of David Brandt-Erichsen overseeing construction on a seventh-generation Hubble Space Telescope. The telescope’s component mirrors are the size of a large sports stadium. Illustration: Mark Maxwell

the National Space Institute to form the National Space Society in 1987, the headquarters moved to Washington, D.C. but David remained in Tucson. He continued to serve for several years on the NSS Board of Directors and as assistant secretary.

Now retired, David remains in Tucson with his wife, two cats, and a collection of space books and post-1982 Jackie Chan movies. He is an avid hiker who has guided numerous trips into the canyon country of southern Utah, and is also vice-president and webmaster for the Natural Arch and Bridge Society (www.naturalarches.org). He would love to catalog any natural arches on Mars (the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter has already discovered a

possible candidate).

Of the items David has placed on the Web, the most personally gratifying to him is the book *Colonies in Space*, after Mr. Heppenheimer graciously granted permission to post the book. David hopes that by making material like this easily available, it might inspire future space entrepreneurs. David is currently in the middle of the tedious task of scanning the 1,000-page book *Resources of Near-Earth Space* for distribution on the Web. NSS graciously thanks David for his commitment to do whatever it takes to get the word out, worldwide. ■



David Brandt-Erichsen

National Space Society Online Library

<http://www.nss.org/library/>

SPACE SHUTTLE VIDEO LIBRARY

Video highlights from every Shuttle mission, narrated by the astronauts.

SPACE STATION LIBRARY

Reference Guide to the International Space Station

SPACE SOLAR POWER LIBRARY

www.nss.org/ssp

Space-Based Solar Power as an Opportunity for Strategic Security (2007 NSSO report)

Sun Power: The Global Solution for the Coming Energy Crisis (book by Ralph Nansen)

Space Power (book by G. Harry Stine)

Silent Power (forthcoming book, Space Solar Power Workshop, Georgia Institute of Technology)

Laying the Foundation for Space Solar Power (National Academy of Sciences, 2001)

DOE/NASA Satellite Power System Concept Development and Evaluation Program (over 9,000 pages in over 70 documents circa 1980)

Electric Power from Orbit (National Academy of Sciences, 1981)

Solar Power Satellites (Office of Technology Assessment, 1981)

Lunar Resources Utilization for Space Construction [of SPS] (General Dynamics, 1979)

SPACE SETTLEMENT LIBRARY

Colonies in Space (book by T.A. Heppenheimer)

Space Settlements – A Design Study (NASA Special Publication 413)

Space Resources and Space Settlements (NASA Special Publication 428)

Space Colonies (CoEvolution Quarterly book)

L5 News Archive

Toward Distant Suns (book by T.A. Heppenheimer)

Space Manufacturing Library

Space Resources Library

Space Colonization Conference Abstracts

LUNAR BASES AND SETTLEMENT LIBRARY

Lunar Bases and Space Activities of the 21st Century

The Second Conference on Lunar Bases and Space Activities of the 21st Century

Lunar Resources Utilization for Space Construction

MARS LIBRARY

NASA Mars Reference Mission (Mars "Semi-Direct")

"Mars Direct" articles from *Ad Astra*

Humans to Mars: Fifty Years of Mission Planning, 1950-2000

SPACE POLICY LIBRARY

Mars Wars: The Rise and Fall of the Space Exploration Initiative (2007)

U.S. National Space Policy, 2006

NASA's Exploration Systems Architecture Study (2005)

Report of the President's Commission on Implementation of United States Space Exploration Policy, (2004)

The Space Shuttle Decision (book by T.A. Heppenheimer)

America at the Threshold – Report for the Synthesis Group on America's Space Exploration Initiative

Pioneering the Space Frontier – Report of the National Commission on Space

SPACE ELEVATOR LIBRARY

Space Elevators – An Advanced Earth-Space Infrastructure for the New Millennium

The Space Elevator (by Bradley C. Edwards, NASA

Institute for Advanced Concepts Study Phase 1 Final Report)

The Space Elevator (NIAC Study Phase 2 Final Report)

