



Letter from the Editor

This month we have an exciting mix of the present and aspirations for bold and ambitious journeys to our nearest stellar neighbours – the Alpha Centauri system where the first robotic probes may visit in the not too distant future. And while some visionaries are studying how to reach out to the stars, we take a look at a visitor from a distant place in the galaxy that recently entered our solar system.

China is planning a highly ambitious mission to the far side of the Moon, an important step forward with a communications relay station to send back vital data on a hemisphere we have yet to visit. And data which is already streaming back to Earth from existing planetary missions is processed and analysed using a unique capability residing at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

Mars beckons, however, and last month the BIS held an important seminar which brought together key thinkers and strategists on this next goal for explorers from Earth – robots and humans. But which is a priority: machines or people? Tell us what you think.

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The British Interplanetary Society promotes the exploration and use of space for the benefit of humanity, connecting people to create, educate and inspire, and advance knowledge in all aspects of astronautics.

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Stephen Ashworth reports on a major seminar held by the British Interplanetary Society into issues regarding expeditions to Mars and the challenges likely to be faced by early settlers.

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Contributor Peter Milne considers the challenges facing extra-solar navigation teams as they plan a mission to Alpha Centauri.

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In a connection to Arthur C. Clarke's fictional encounter, Jordi Gutierrez describes the recent fly-by of a visitor from beyond the solar system.

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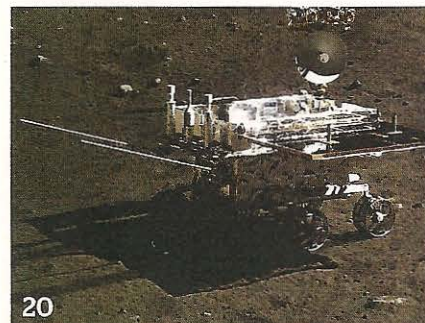
A little known activity at NASA/JPL is key to archiving software and datasets for mission analysis, as described by Charles H. Acton and Fabrizio Bernardini.

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New Zealand has become the latest country to launch a satellite from its own territory. Bob Evans takes a look behind the headlines.



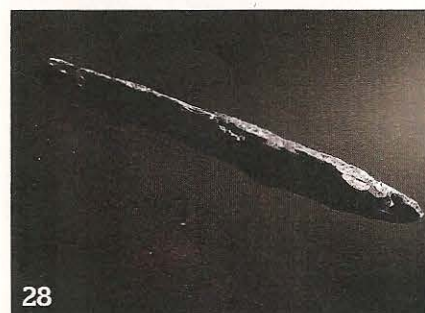
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