

An iGlobe for home or school



A technology thought from Bruce Philpott — Dec. 2020

I've long thought we were nearly to the point of being able to commercially produce a self-updating wi-fi-connected Earth-globe for household enjoyment. With recent innovations, this may now be possible.

It would be a stationary 30" sphere comprised of four shapes like giant cantaloupe quarter-wedges, or maybe 60 full-bleed triangular LED touch-screens abutting each other in a geodesic sphere of 12 pentagons, all gently convexly shaped to form a nearly perfect sphere depicting our Earth.

The sphere would be rigidly supported from a sturdy steel shaft entering at 23.5 degrees

into the south pole. This shaft would contain the power cable. The sphere wouldn't rotate, but the display on the surfaces of the virtually seamless panels would make it appear to do so. It could be manually "spun" on its axis just as easily as you flick to scroll on your phone or iPad.

If you were to touch an area on the globe with pinched fingers and spread them apart (even repeatedly), this would magnify that center area. The far half of the globe would turn black during any enlargement (to indicate that it was an enlarged area).

Using a phone controller app via Bluetooth, you could temporarily unlock the globe's axis and tilt Antarctica to face you, for instance, to ponder the fact that you could cut over 2,000 miles (4 hours) off a flight from Perth, Australia

to Buenos Aires, Argentina if you flew over the south pole instead of flying west or east. We don't often get to view the globe from that angle. A flip of that Unlock Axis switch would reorient the globe imagery onto its axis.

The initial idea came to me decades ago when I looked at a globe and noticed the borders and nations weren't up to date. I thought with internet access, a globe's information could be kept constantly up to date.

Since then, the idea has had time to percolate as the internet has become more and more capable of realtime news and weather updates. I realized the user of this sphere could choose many modes in which to enjoy and learn from the globe.

For everyday display, I would decide if I wanted the multi-satellite view of my globe to be stationary as the light from the sun rotates around it (as it seems to do, from our point of view), or from which direction in the room the sunlight would seem to constantly come as the image details of the Earth constantly rotate around the stationary globe's axis.

Once hooked up to the internet, the sun would rise and set on this globe in time with our real sun. We'd see the lights of large cities on the night side. The angle of the sun would be determined by the earth's position (season of the year) in its orbit around the sun. We could flip from one time of year to another (between solstices, for instance) to observe the differences in apparent solar angle.

One mode might include current weather conditions, so we could see that hurricane forming in the gulf and all of the rest of the clouds, as you'd see our planet from space.

As the seamless image on this stationary globe rotated, you'd see a composite of recent satellite views; more recent than Google Earth,

perhaps, but not actually in real time, of course. A different composite view would be available, comprised of images taken when there was no cloud cover over areas, so you could choose to switch the clouds on or off as you wanted.

Another view we could choose would be a political map, with nations, states, etc. in various colors, with their borders shown. You could choose a "Conflicts" mode which would highlight contested borders and names. These borders could be superimposed on the pictorial images, or the areas made discrete colors for clarity.

You'd be able to set a date in history and watch, for instance, Germany occupying Poland, France, etc. in WWII. You could even use that date setting feature to dial far back enough to watch Pangaea split apart and form our current continents.

The speed of elapsing time could be adjusted so you could watch the building of the Suez Canal, for example.

