

Special Issue

Enabling Solutions for the Grand Challenge of Electric Propulsion Development

Message from the Guest Editors

Electric propulsion (EP) boasts a remarkable legacy of success within just a few decades, tracing its origins as an independent field back to the early 1960s. This rapid ascent, however, faces transformative challenges driven by the evolving demands of the modern era of space exploration. The need for faster, cost-effective development methodologies is reshaping the EP landscape, and it will be essential to scale EP system manufacturing to match the rise in satellite constellations. Sustainability goals, rapid time-to-market pressures, and demands for high reliability challenge traditional design and qualification norms, intensifying the drive to evolve conventional methods. Conventional practices are being further challenged by the increasing interest in very-low Earth orbit (VLEO) operations, as well as ambitions for more challenging deep-space science and human exploration missions that push boundaries in the ability to demonstrate integrated system performance and lifetime. Facility effects and the limitations of ground testing continue to be highlighted by gaps in translating on-ground verifications to on-orbit performance.

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