THE COMPUTER U F O NEWSLETTER

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THE COMPUTER UFO NEWSLETTER

"The Computer UFO Newsletter" is an aperiodical newsletter published from four to six times per year, entirely devoted to presentation of works and discussions about the use of computer in ufology.

Contributions are open to all researchers with personal experience in the field.

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily shared by the Editor.

The newsletter is avaiable in computerized version on floppy disk / cassette for Commodore-64 microcomputer.

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EDITORIAL

In the last issue we proposed a debate about the search for a common database to use in connection with UFO catalogues. Obviously, for each chief computer we should choice a particular database program able to produce a sequential file : another important aim is to succeed in exchanging data between different machines using a suitable hardware/software interface (the Apple II/C-64 connection seems to have been resolved now), so that the generated file should have a similar structure.

It is easy to understand the importance to have an unique program for all researchers storing cases on their own computers. First of all, a lot of time would be saved as it would not be necessary to write a personal program : ITACAT and UFODOC are clear example of customized software involving a great loss of time. Their results were undoubtely interesting, but we think a better work would have been the establishment of such catalogues on a professional database avaiable on the software market. Exchange of data would have been very quick and processing options more sophisticated.

Through such database programs the user is able to establish the fields he wishes inside a single record. So the first step is the discussion about WHAT parameters (fields) should be considered in storing UFO cases. For example, we propose the following ones :

(1)   an eventual code or reference number on national basis
(2)   date
(3)   hour
(4)   location
(5)   classification
(6)   evaluation
(7)   [chief] sources

As you can see the numbers of fields is fairly limited and far from the giant coding proposed (and sometimes partially carried out) in the seventies. We don't believe much in storing of large mass of data, due to several causes : one of them is the scarce reliability of information we have, another is the limited hardware of most personal computers. Mainframes are another matter at moment : they can be used only occasionally by a sole researcher, so their effective employment is very restricted. Another reason of our own point of view is that we aren't sure about the possibility to insert a human experience like the UFO sighting under the form of "coded" information. Witnesses are different one from another, so their tales have different characteristics : coding their information, we falsify them.

Beyond the other important problems about the way to insert UFO cases in a computer, we think our proposal of database could be accepted as it is, i.e. a reference-work able to help researchers in handling the casuistry. Probably, it is the best solution : personal computers are usually used directly only by their owners, so no huge project involving a massive storing of data is possible.

A database having few fundamental fields is necessary. There are some reasons to make such a choice :

(1)   it would use only fairly "sure" parameters.

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(2) · it would represent a valuable source of information.
(3) it would save a lot of time.
(4) it would allow the use of common low-cost personal/home computers.
(5) it would allow a very quick exchange of data using a same program
for a same machine.

We think hoping a computerized catalogue of international sightings on
the model of UFOCAT is utopistic, the same for a national casuistry
using occasionally a mainframe. The sole solution to our problems is in
the personal computer area at moment, but it is absolutely necessary to
find a common software and - above all - methodology. On the contrary,
we'll succeed in doing only a few double works.

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As regards the Commodore 64/128 (the "personal" computer having the
wider diffusion among ufologists at moment) I would like to propose a
preliminary idea of common database. At moment there are many powerful
programs avaiable on the market : nearly all work only with the disk
drive and this is a first problem. Most ufologists - especially in
Europe - own only the tape recorder, so that they can use only simple
databases generating sequential files. Possible solutions are two :
A) employ exclusively sophisticated software for disc drives
B) employ two different programs, one for disk, the other for tape,
but with the same structure.
According to us the first choice would be the best one, but avaiable
resources would be limited : the second one could be an acceptable
compromise. Readers' opinions on the matter would be interesting.
But let's go on presenting our own proposal of a possible common
database. Among the most powerful programs we know at moment there are
:
SUPERBASE (with a built-in language, also in the new 2.2 version);
MULTIDATA; PRACTIFILE; THE CONSULTANT; VIZASTAR (integrated with a
spreadsheet and a graphic package. It is very powerful, but it needs a
cartridge of 4 or 8 (XL version) Kbytes and its cost is fairly high).
Most of them make use of random files, so that a virtually unlimited
number of records can be entered : this avoids the well-know problems
of RAM with the C-64, but it makes work times quite more long. It would
be also important to choice a program having a version for the C-128,
so that the "old 64" files could be manipulated by a more powerful
computer. On the ground of these and other requirements we think
SUPERBASE is the suitable database for researchers' aims. It is
available at low cost, but we could supply a customized version (for
personal use only) to all ufologists interested in the matter, when
storing standards will be fixed. The program has already been employed
by some Italian ufologists for storing bibliographic and newsclipping
files, with interesting results. SUPERBASE has remarkable
characteristics : 1108 characters, 127 fields and four screens per
record are only some of its excellent qualities. The user can set name,
number and size of the fields : one of them will be the key-field for
the many available search options.
A database of UFO events for a personal computer must include all
fundamental data, as already mentioned. We propose these fields :

DATE   6 characters
HOUR   4 characters
LOCATION   30 characters

PROVINCE/REGION   3 characters
CLASSIFICATION (*)   10 characters
EVALUATION   10 characters
NOTES   30 characters
(chief ?) SOURCES   a whole page

Such a structure could be used successfully in connection with any kind of casuistry, from "nocturnal lights" events to exotic close encounters. certainly, if all researchers having a C-64 should use such a database, exchange and processing of data would be much more simple and quick. But don't deceive ourselves of reaching such an ambitious objective. Difficulties and problems are really many (don't forget ufology is only a hobby for nearly all of us) and even the establishment of a standard database could be a valuable success. In fact, beyond finding an unique program for a given machine, we should fix the structure of the database as a standard for ALL kinds of (personal) computers. By this way an eventual exchange of data between two different machines via a suitable interface could be made much more easy. In Italy we are trying a similar operation between a Commodore 64 and a Apple II. Stored on the first computer there are hundreds of cases gathered on a local - provincial - basis (it is a current ICUFOS project) : the aim is to transfer those data on a Apple II/e or /c, where a better software/hardware can allow some interesting analyses. Database programs employed in both computers are nearly equal in structure, so that there wouldn't be great difficulties in carrying out the exchange. We hope to present an article about this work on a next CUFON issue.

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NOTES -

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As regards the classification of events, besides using the well-know Hynek one (with a few light changes, as employed in ITACAT and by several European UFO associations), we would like to propose to insert further information. You know that many CE 3 show collateral effects as traces and E.M. effects or that some "nocturnal lights" seem to produce disturbances in animals. Using our usual classification you aren't able to know if a CE 3 has physical traces. Therefore it is necessary to insert a sort of simple "code" for supplying further information as :

T = Traces
A = Animal disturbance
E = "ElectroMagnetic" effects
P = Physiological effects
F = Photo or Film available

Moreover a CE 2 or CE 3 or CE 4 followed by a "*" should remark a case without the perception of a real UFO phenomenon (as "mysterious" nests in cornfields or "bedroom visitors", when mentioned in relation with UFOs).

Project UFODATA

Per Andersen, a well-known Danish UFO researcher, has been educated as a computer scientist at the University of Aarhus : he is currently employed as an assisting professor at the Computing Center at the University of Copenhagen, acting as a consultant in the field of micro-computers. Andersen has authored reports, documents and numerous articles on the subject of UFOs in magazines such as "UFO-Nyt", "SUFOI Newsletter", "UFO Forskning" and "Sceptica". Among his activities inside S.U.F.O.I., he is leader of Project UFODATA which handles the electronic data processing of all Danish UFO and IFO reports.
The following paper was presented at the First International B.U.F.O.R.A. Congress in 1979 : notwithstanding it is seven years-old, both Editor and author think most ideas developed at that time are still interesting and worth to be presented to CUFON readers. Author's address :
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1. WHAT IS THE REASON FOR USING ELECTRONIC DATA PROCESSING ?

There are many ways of how to try to explain the UFO phenomena. Among these I think that the qualitative and quantitative analyses must be carefully considered and in the following the difference between these methods will be adumbrated.

(A) Qualitative analyses -
Some of the UFO problems may be solved by thoroughly studying some selected reports that are considered signiificant, e.g. some reliable close encounters which can be studied in great detail. Jonh G.Fuller's book on the Betty and Barney Hill case "The Interrupted Journey" is an example of such a qualitative analysis. The advantage of the qualitative analysis is that it may deepen our knowledge of the puzzling nature of the UFO phenomena. On the other hand only really good reports can be used and qualified field investigators and interviewers are required, including experts within the fields of hypnosis, physics, sociology, psycology, etc......

(B) Quantitative analyses -
But a quantitatiive analysis may be applied where the ufologist works with a great amount of reports. The single report will only be significant in so far as it forms part of the basic material for the total analysis. We may prefer this method because there is no requirement of particularly good reports. A large section of the UFO and IFO reports can be used. In addition to this it is an advantage to the able to make a total analysis of the UFO phenomena to shed new light on general aspects. Or it is possible to classify reports according to rules of similarity and diversification so that varying patterns of UFO behaviour might be uncovered. This is where the

electronic data processing offers many interesting possibilities as it
is especially suited for the analyses of a great amount of data. There
are also problems because a good and efficient system for the
collection of reports is required; at the same time the quantitative
analyses can be costly, e.g. the electronic data procesing.
But what are the advantage of using electronic data processing in
connection with the quantitative analyses of UFO an IFO reports?. Well,
as far as I can see, there are two substantial advantages. First of all
the reports are easily accesible. Within short time reports or
categories of reports can be made available, e.g. suppose we would like
to get hold of all the Danish reports describing two objects, the one
green the other red. This might be interesting because UFO encounters
of this type bear a likeness with observations of ordinary air-crafts.
Until now it would have been rather time-consuming to find these
reports as all reports should be read before the reports with these
characteristics could be found. Suppose instead that all Danish reports
were computerized, e.g. on punch cards, the work would soon be
finished. A copy of the reports in question could be procured in half
or one hour!. Most of the time would be spent waiting for the
information to be written on the line-printer. This trnscrips of date,
exact time, geographical position and other pieces of relevant
information would be sufficient to find the original reports from the
archive in a very short time.
Secondly: stastistics could be easily worked out. The advantage is
clearly seen when complex analyses must be carried out, e.g.
cross-tabulations where the ufologist wants to find tha answer to a
question like, say, how many observations of a given color correspond
to observations of a given shape. So what is done is this, two
parametres are crossed with the result that we will know how many
reports can be found in every possible category. If this should be done
manually it would be extremely time-consuming. But the computer can do
this job in a half or a full hour when reports are computerized. The
time necessary for operating the machine takes even less time. All in
all the electronic encoding of reports is time-saving, and statistics
can easily be worked out. On the other hand it must be admitted that
these operations are costly. It can be difficult for UFO organizations
to find the economic resources to buy or lease the required
computer-time, etc......
However, it must be born in mind that the use of computers may also
have some unforseen implications, e.g. "misuse of extensive files" or
"GIGO" (i.e. "Garbage In, Garbage out"). It is therefore very important
that those in charge of the electronics data processing, programmers,
and statisticians are conscientious and meticulous. Another problem may
be that an increasing number of UFO organizations suddenly realize the
advantages and the necessity of computerizing reports so that one data
bank after other crops up all over the world. If we do not pay
attention to this problem now, the processing of UFO and IFO reports
will be quite chaotic on an international level as many ufologists will
do same kind of work, let alone the rist of different systems being
applied for the electronic processing of reports. I shal return to this
problem later.
But now I shall give an account of the development of Scandinavian UFO
Information's Project UFODATA - that is the project for the electronic
data processing of reports.

3.   THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT UFODATA.

How in fact did the project start? What is the idea behind it?
Well, the project came into existence rather recently - a few years ago
(please remember the text was written in 1979 - Editor). Within the
first years it was soon established - and we have - as far as I can see
- achieved satisfactory results. In 1977 I became interested in the
potentiality of electronic processing of reports and I wrote some
papers on the prospects of the data processing of UFO and IFO reports.
The first was called "The Storing and Input of Data" in which I
discussed the expediency of coding and punching UFO reports. The second
one was called "The Coding of UFO Reports" in which I described the
parametres of that were to be encoded and punched. In this paper a
code-book was adumbrated. The third and last one from 1977 described a
test-system which briefly deals with the facilities necessary for the
electronic processing of reports. This blue-print showed how it was
possible to select certain reports and work out statistic analyses. The
test-system consisted of an EDP programme for file-manipulations which
I developed at the University of Arhus.
In July 1977 I made a lecture titled "UFO Reports and Data Processing"
at the UFO seminar in Denmark. Then it was agreed to start the
electronic data processing of reports and project UFODATA was commenced
in fact. A few months later - in September 1977 Project UFODATA was
officially started when I was elected member on the board of SUFOI as
"a computer consultant". The first job that had to be carried out by
Project UFODATA was to clarify the thoughts and ideas concerning the
code-book and - at the next stage - to complete it. The 60-pages book
was made avaible in January 1978 and has since been revised as there
has been a demand for new codes or the existing codes have needed to be
stated more exactly. But the code-book was now ready and the encoding
of the first reports could now be started. In February 1978 the first
results of Project UFODATA was at hand. On the basis of this I wrote
"The Time Law". In this I dealt dealt with analyses of the time of day
UFO's are observed. Originally I had in mind to develop the
above-mentioned test-system into a programme proper which could be used
for the data processing of UFO and IFO reports. In the beginning of
1978 however, I studied the SPSS system, i.e. "The Statistical Package
for the Social Sciences". This sociological/statistical electronic data
proccessing system has found general use all over the world. It has
been installed at the University of Arhus, were I have access to it. I
soon realized the potential of this system because it contains the
facilities to statistical analyses. In addition to this the existing
encoding of UFO and IFO reports could fit in with the SPSS system
without difficulty, so Project UFODATA did not hesitate to apply this
comprehensive statistical system.
All Danish reports from 1976 were the first ones to be coded and
punched on punched cards and in March 1979 they were all completed. By
then about 500 UFO and IFO reports had been encoded and punched. Today
(1979 - Ed.) we have reached about 700 reports. Five operators now work
for project UFODATA, but more are being trained and the group may soon
be extended to 10 persons.

4.   PROJECT UFODATA - THE CODING OF THE REPORTS.

As mentioned Project UFODATA undertakes to code and punch SUFOI's

Danish UFO and IFO reports. Most UFO organizations that use electronic data processing omit the IFO reports, but project UFODATA encodes these as well. Besides the expediency of making cross-checks of UFO and IFO reports, we gain an insight into how identifiable flying objects like airplanes, planets, meteors are perceived.

The primary material is naturally the original Danish reports. Material includes newsclippings, reports from the UFO organizations in Denmark, etc.... The reports are then coded and put on a data-sheet which quite simply is a piece of paper with a line for each report and a column for every parametre that is coded. For this purpose the code-book is used. The reports are later punched on punched cards on the basis of the data-sheets. The punching can be either manual on a keyboard punch or by input on a display unit and punched on a punching station. The punched reports constitutes our data bank. Well, it is a problem when reports are coded that we have to establish what data we want to include in the coding and we are often in a dilemma because on the one hand we want as much information per report as possible, on the other hand we want to code as many reports as possible. The inevitable outcome of this is, as a rule, that we have to leave out some parametres though we find them both desirable and applicable.

Anothe dilemma is whether we should aim at coding information about the observed object, or information about the observer and the circumstances at the encounter, In other words it is a question whether we want to put emphasis on a phsycal explanation of the UFO phenomena or on possible sociological or psychological explanations. The parametres we apply can be divided into some main categories. They will be stated briefly in the following :

Identification :   this is a number of eleven figures containing e.g. information about the year, the month, and the date of the encounter.

Place :   the postal area of the site of the encounter.

Time :   information about how exact the time of the encounter is states. The time of the encounter and its duration.

The Object :   under this entry a gret many parametre of the observed object are encoded. If several, widley differing objects are observed, a set of data for each group of identical objects are coded. The following details are registred; number of objects, colour of objects, nature of light radiation, sound effects, the appearance and disappearance of the object - direction of compass, and height of angle, and possible alterations of direction, altitude, and speed.

Circumstances :   a two-figured code about weather conditions during the encounter.

The Observer :   his or her age, sex, employment are encooded and the nuumber of witnesses, as well.

Reference :   references are encoded, that is the year when the report was put down, what form or type of report (including a note if the report comes fromm another Danish UFO organization) and finally if the report has been referred to in our magazine "UFO-NYT" (UFO News) or in another UFO magazine.

Comments :   special information about the encounter is mentioned here. Some details are considered rare, so that it is not necessary to make particular parametres to cover them. Such details are coded under this category. Under this entry the type of the encounter can be stated (e.g. "close encounter") and special characteristics e.g. observation of Ufonauts or EM effects (electro magnetic effects) of various kinds.

Strangeness :   if the field investigator comes across certain
peculiarities it will be dealt with under this category. Strangeness is
coded by degree; the scale goes from 0-9, 0 indicates "missing"
(unknown strangeness) whereas "I" means the lowest degree of
strangeness and "9" the highest. There is no fixed scale to determine
the degree of strangeness; it is up to field investigator's judgement
to do so.
Reliability :   the degree of reliability is an expression of
how much the account of the encounter can be trusted. Did it in fact
take place the way we were told it did?. All the full numbers from 0-9
are applied were "0" indicates "missing" (unknown reliability), "I" the
lowest degree of reliability e.g. an unverified notice in a newspaper -
and "9" the highest degree of reliability. Like the degree of
strangeness, the degree of reliability is determined by the field
investigator. There is no fixed scale. However, there are certain
directives that must be observed when determining the degree of
strangeness and the degree of reliability. These are the parametres
that are used when any report is coded by project UFODATA. The coding
of UFO and IFO reports is basically the same.

5.   PROJECT UFODATA - THE PROCESSING OF REPORTS.

Project UFODATA uses the SPSS system for the processing of UFO and IFO
reports. SPSS is an abreviation of "Statisticcal Package for the Social
Sciences" and it is a system for electronic data processing especially
applicable for the departments of the social sciences at universities
and similar institutions all over the world. The SPSS system was
originally developed in the USA. But has also been put into use in many
countries outside the USA, e.g. in Europe. The system is very
comprehensive and offers many possibilities for the processing of data.
The main purpose of it when given a certain ammount of data on a
certain format - is to carry out social statistic analyses of the given
material. The analyses extend from rather simple ones, e.g. frequency
tables, cross- tabulations with chi-square-tests or scattergrams to
advanced statistical tests. As the SPSS system contains all the
facilities that are required by a project like Project UFODATA, it was
natural that we stated to use this system. The processing of UFO and
IFO reports is a two-staged operation. To begin with a so-called SPSS
system file is made, and then later the actual analyses of the material
is carried out, and results are printed out. The data necessary for
making a system file are made up by two types. First of all the system
must be fed with the material that is going to be analysed. In this
case we have the many UFO and IFO reports on punched cards. The reports
must have a certain format in order to be processed by the SPSS system,
e.g. it is a condition that the mass of data is so-called quadrangular
- that is the material must be made up by a definite number of reports
which again must be made up by a definite number of so-called
parametres where each of them may be given certain values. A parametre
can be the date or the number of objects and the parametres we use are
mentioned above.
Along with the material to be processed the system requires many pieces
of information about e,g, the constituent parametres. These exits as
punched cards with which the system is fed. This is the other kind of
data. The SPSS system is then fed with these two types of data and this
results in the so-called SPSS system file. The file contains the data

or material that is to be analysed an information about its stucture. However, it is possible to have various statistical analyses printed out while the system file is being made. We now have a system-file that is permanently in the computer and it is normally not necessary to input the punched cards once again. On the basis of this system file many analyses can be made. If the ufoloogist wants to make some statistical analyses of the reports in the system-file, then he feeds the SPSS with the system file along with information about the requested analyses. The information can be supplied in two ways. One way of doing this is to write on the format requested by the SPSS system on e.g. punched cards. These data can be called job-information or Job-cards. Together with the system file the job-cards are fed into the SPSS system and the analyses is made. The other way of doing it, is to apply the job-generator I have developed. The job-generator is a program that asks questions about the requested analyses; the output of this programme supplies the above mentioned job-cards automatically. Together with the system file these job-cards are supplied in a like manner as before to the SPSS system.
The advantage of applying the job-generator is that we do not have to trouble with the format required by the SPSS system. Instead the job-generator just requires the operator to answer some very simple questions. The job-generator will automatically transcribe the information into the required SPSS format. As the job-generator can be operated be someone who is not familiar with the format of the SPSS system, it enables the ufologist without much computer experience to make analyses of reports. But it is an advantage even to those who are familiar with the SPSS system as the use of the job-generator will minimize the risk of making mistakes when the format is written. Consequently reruns can be avoided. Whether, however, we decide to use the job-generator or to use the job-cards directly the output of the run will be a set of statistical analyses. This can be simple tables of frequency or cross-tabulations etc. But other than statistical analyses can be made, e.g. it is possible to look for certain reports or groups of reports and it is in asset to the SPSS system that is pratical in connection with the processing of UFO and IFO reports. So the SPSS system-file is not only the basis of the statistical analyses, but it is also an efficient electronic report-file - or data bank so to say - were the reports can be found without difficulty when they are needed.

6.   RESULTS.

Scandinavian UFO Information has achieved some satisfactory results since Project UFODATA started the electronic data processing of Danish reports. As mentioned before, we have about 700 UFO and IFO reports in our data bank. Even if it is rather small compared to other data banks in the world - e.g. UFOCAT in the USA (- a strange question : where is this famous UFOCAT at present ? - Ed.) - our data bank is good enough for making thorough analyses and studies of Danish reports. "The Time Law" was the first book (published in 1978) that was published as the result of Project UFODATA'S efforts. It contains an analysis of the time-of-day distribution of Danish UFO encounters and it is an attempt to find the answer to three questions:

1)   What is the time-of-day distribution of the Danish UFO encounters ?

2)   Is this in accordance with foreign analyses like the analyses undertaken by e.g. Jaques Vallee ?
3)   Can this time-of-day distribution be ascribed to the cause of natural factors ?

There seems to be a strong indication that the Danish data support international theories in this field and that certain characteristics cannot be explained as the result of so-called "natural factors". It is hard to find a natural explanation to the secondary maximum of frequency at 3.30 in the morning. Project UFODATA has achieved other results in the previous years within international co-operation. Around the world there are individuals or groups who work with electronic data processing of reports and it is only natural that these persons (who can be considered specialists) try to get touch with one another. Project UFODATA is in contact with some of these groups, e.g. in Sweden, Belgium, England, and USA (do you know them ? - Ed.). The whole problem of international co-operation of the electronic data processing of UFO and IFO reports is a matter I shall return to in the concluding remarks. But what is the future of Priject UFODATA ?. The answer to this problem can be summed up in five points:

1)   We will extend the number of active operators in Project UFODATA in order to extend the capacity of the project as a whole.
2)   Project UFODATA will continue to computerize Danish UFO and IFO reports in a growing number.
3)   We will continue to study the theoretical side of the electronic data processing of reports.
4)   We will publish books and papers on and about Project UFODATA and the results we have achieved.
5)   We will further engage in the international co-operation of the EDP of reports. Project UFODATA will extend its contacts with UFO organizations and groups in other countries and participate in international groups, meeting and conferences.

8.   THE FUTURE OF INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION.

Finally I shall discuss some of the problems in connection with international co-operation of the electronic data processing of the reports. What is the international situation concerning the use of computers for the processing of reports ? By and large there are three groups of persons who are interested in this subject:

1)   There are those who work out computer files for local reports. This is what Project UFODATA does.
2)   There are those who work out files for all accessible reports, e.g. the american data bank UFOCAT.
3)   There are those who are interested in data processing of UFO and IFO reports, but who have not started the pratical work yet.

I think it is necessary to focus on the activities of those in the second group who work with a computer file for all accessible reports. For many years extensive central data banks have been considered the most profitable among computer experts. In many countries extensive data banks, containing information about the population, have been established. It is probably due to this general trend of establishing

extensive data banks that ufologists have expressed the desiderability
of having data banks with information about most UFO encounters from
all over the world. As long as only a few ufologist have been occupied
with the electronic data processing of reports, it has been reasonably
enough to establish one big data bank with so many reports from the
world as possible. But today things have changed. So many groups and
individuals are working with computerizing reports that I consider the
establishment of more international data banks to be unnecessary at the
moment. There are some big disadvantages of the work that is done at
the big data banks. I shall mention a few of negative sides. First of
all there are many ufologists who indipendently of one another attempt
to work out data banks of UFO encounters from all over the world.
However, this is not only a waste time, as a group in Belgium might
encode exactly the same reports as a group in the USA, but what is
worse the consequence might be that the very same report can be encoded
in different ways. One thing is that half the work done by these two
indipendent groups is superflous another thing is that the same report
is encoded differently in the two data banks. The latter can be a minor
catastrophe as it can be difficult to determine whether it is the same
UFO encounter in question.
Another disadvantage is thet some computerized information is not
based on the original reports. I have e.g. heard that some of the
reports in the american data bank UFOCAT come from UFO magazines. So
the data bank contains information of UFO encounters that are not based
on first hand accounts : consequently we cannot tell for sure whether
some or many details have been lost or distorted. Neither the computer
scientist nor the ufologist can be satisfied with this. These are some
of the disadvantages of the big international data banks containing
information of UFO encounters from all over the world. It is, however,
interesting to note that now there is a general tendency among computer
experts to avoid the big central data banks and they seem to be more
and more in favour of decentralized computer with smaller data banks.
The reason for this is e.g. that the great data banks are difficult to
operate and hard to survey. I think it would be advisable to follow
this trend as regards the data processing of reports. I think it would
be an advantage if UFO and IFO reports were encoded on smaller and
decentralized computers instead of the bigger ones. A decentralized
encoding should be carried out by various UFO organizations and groups
around the world so that each is responsible for its own area. The
encoding of reports could be co-ordinated through international
co-operation and there could be a profitable exchange of ideas and
data. There is much to be said for the decentralized encoding in local
data banks :

1)   we can be sure that the decentralized encoding will be carried
out by ufologists with local knowledge and experience. In tthis way it
is possible to avoid the risk of distortion which might be the
inevitable result if the reports is encoded in a centralized data bank
by people without the necessary background.
2)   the encoding will be based on the original reports and not on the
basis of 2nd or 3rd hand information from UFO magazines. The advantage
is quite evident.
3)   we can be sure that there will be a more extensive geogrephical
coverage. This means that the total number of different reports will be
bigger. This is due to the fact that it will normally be difficult for
the centralized data bank to manage the encoding of all reports within
a certain area. The local organization or group will find it easier to

overcome this problem.

4) " the decentralized data banks gives better conditions for statistical research. It will be difficult for local ufologists to make statistical analyses of the reports at a big centralized data bank, but the decentralized data bank offers good opportunities for doing research within the local area, and it will be easy to acquire material from nearby data banks. Of course it will be difficult to get access to reports from distant countries, and it will be difficult to make analyses of the total material from all countries.

These are some of the advantages and disadvantages of centralized and decentralized data banks containing UFO and IFO reports. My opinion is, though, that a comparison will show that we will benefit more from the decentralized encoding and the decentralized data-files. But in order to be able to make a decentralized collection and coding of reports the following must be observed :

1)   it is necessary that there are UFO organizations or groups in as many countries as possible so that local data banks can be set up. As far as I can see, this is possible (now the situation seems a little different - Ed.).

2)   it is necessary that the UFO organizations can establish a consistent terminology and a set of definitions and classifications. In other words "we must learn to speak the same language" !

3)   it is necessary that we attempt to establish universal criteria and a system of encoding, so that it is possible to exchange data and make joint analyses.

4)   it is necessary to ensure reasonable possibilities for the exchange of information, experience and data about the work within this field.

All in all : it is desiderable and necessary to extend international co-operation within the field of encoding and processing of UFO and IFO reports. I suggest that an international group for data-interested ufologists is set up. This is certainly one way of ensuring efficient international co-operation. If a group of ufologists is set up there will be several ways in which it could work. One of the ways is what we could call a centralized solution. The groups' main working area will be to collect and distribute material and information about the data processing of UFO and IFO reports. Further it will be responsible for passing on data from various report files of the associated organizations and groups. Every organization will be currently informed (e.g. through a kind of news-letter) by the central international group which will undertake international co-ordination. Some of the countries that might be interested in a international work of this kind are : Belgium, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, USA, England and France. The advantage of this centralized structure is its efficiency and reliability that is, if the cantral group is reliable. On the other hand it requires that a group can be set up and that it will undertake the responsibility of collecting and distributing the material. An alternative solution for the setting up of an international group of of data-interested ufologists could be a decentralized structure where each organization communicate from one to the other through a circle. The advantage is that a central group is not needed. And this will no doubt be time-consuming. On the other hand there are some drawbacks: the system is rather vulnerable as every link in the chain may delay the circulation of material. Moreover it will take quite a long time before all the associated organizations ang groups have received the

material in circulation. The centralized structure is preferable if it is "feasible, that is. Apart from undertaking contact among the interested UFO associations, the group could arrange meetings, conferences, work-groups and seminars. These meetings and the current contact could continue the exchange of ideas and information that have taken place during the congress.

I hope that the thoughts about an international group will be seriously considered and discussed and that we shall see the setting up of a group for the international coding and data processing of UFO and IFO reports.

Per Andersen

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Please note that the old Centro Ufologico Nazionale (C.U.N.) is practically defuncted due to inside struggles caused by a small group of people more interested in bureacracy and chatters than in active UFO research. Nearly all the member of that organization (now existing only as a name) are passed in a new recently founded one. It is the Italian Center for UFO Studies, including all leading Italian ufologists : its chief aims are UFO research and circulation of information among ufologists and simple amateurs. Without any doubt, I.C.U.F.O.S. is the biggest Italian association, with members in all over the country and huge amounts of material and documents. It will publish a new brand fine UFO magazine (with detailed English and French abstracts) which first issue will come out around May-June 1986. For any exchange of magazine or correspondence, please contact ICUFOS foreign liasion secretary :

Edoardo Russo Corso V.Emanuele 108 I-10121 Torino ITALY

Inside the Center there is R.U.C. (Rete Ufologica Computerizzata, i.e. Computer UFO Network), a sub-association of all members (more than thirty, at moment) having a personal/home computer. Aims of the Network - not linked via modem - are many, but two are particularly important at moment :
[1] to go on storing the Italian local UFO casuistry on computer using a common database program.
[2] to prepare texts for ICUFOS magazine by a common word-processor ("Easy Script" for C-64, "Homeword" for Apple II). By this way we can save composing charges and give a more professional look to the magazine.
A further aim is the preparation of files relating to miscellaneous UFO material to be made available through the future Bulletin Board Service. Unfortunately its establishment is late : we haven't received the suitable software from our US friends yet.
R.U.C. is completely unformal : association is free of charge and members receive a Bulletin. The only condition to be a member is simple : it is necessary to contribute actively with the Network's works and this involves a minimum limited effort.
News about R.U.C. (directed by Maurizio Verga) will be published inside CUFON from time to time.

A program for the investigator

Sergio Bianchi &
Luigi Di Ruzza

Both authors are young Italian researchers and founders of G.S.E., a local UFO group having seat at Cassino, near Rome. Their remarkable serious activity (it is enough to mention "Project Cartesio", an interesting long survey about how to face an eventual wave of UFO sightings) is now oriented towards the applications of personal/home computers in ufology : the E.D.A. program is a clear example. We hope to read soon other contributions of them on the pages of CUFON.

"Elaborazione Dati Avvistamento", in a word E.D.A. (or S.D.P. - Sighting Data Processing - in English), is a short program for Commodore 64 developed by G.S.E.'s Record Section (a group for UFO research, which has its chief seat in Cassino - italy) to calculate several parameters and data concerning supposed UFO sightings. More exactly we tried to make fast the mathematical operation that generally base themselves on simple geometrical and trigonometrical relations. For the above-mentioned reason the program can't be utilized for every sighting, but only for those cases having quite precise information about the place where the phenomenon was perceived. For instance, cases where it is possible to acquire the above-mentioned extimation by triangulations, or considering data-points such as a mountain, a building, a tree and so on. Particularly, E.D.A. is planned to calculate the following parameters:

A - UFO REAL SIZES
B - UFO APPARENT SIZES
C - AIR DISTANCE UFO-WITNESS
D - TERRESTRIAL DISTANCE UFO-WITNESS
E - UFO HEIGHT FROM THE GROUND AND ITS EVENTUAL ASCENT OR DESCENT
F - UFO SPEED
G - SPACE COVERED BY THE UFO
H - DISTANCE OF THE HORIZON LINE
I - ZENITH ANGLE
L - VISUAL ANGLE COVERED BY THE UFO
M - CREDIBILITY COEFFICIENT
N - PROBABILITY/STRANGENESS COEFFICIENT

Obviously, on drawing up the program, we realized that almost all these parameters can be calculated at least in a couple of ways. For instance the height of a supposed UFO can be known if we have as data either the terrestrial distance and the air distance UFO-witness

(bringing the theorem of Pythagoras), or the air distance and the zenith angle, or else (and this is the commonest way) the terrestrial distance UFO-witness and the zenith angle. Therefore, the program asks the computer-operator for what class of data he has and the parameter required is calculated on the ground of the answer.

We must devote a particular ark to the two last options the program offers : the computation of the credibility coefficient and the estimation of the probability/strangeness coefficient.

Regarding the former, G.S.E. adopted the system suggested by S.U.F. (Sezione Ufologica Fiorentina, an Italian group), with a little variant.

S.U.F.,in order to estimate the credibility of an event (UFO or IFO, it doesn't matter), conceived a score that, basing itself on five conditions aims at expressing the degree of probability that "(...) a certain phenomenon, whatever its nature could have been, has been really observed within ways and times referred by witnesses" (1).

In substance the score considers the following factors:

1 - NUMBER OF WITNESSES
2 - NUMBER OF INDIPENDENT TESTIMONIES
3 - WITNESS' PERSONALITY
4 - TRACES/INSTRUMENTAL DETECTIONS
5 - SOURCE

A score, varying from 0 to 0.20, is assigned to each of these five factors, so that the highest obtanaible limit is 1. The computerized version of this method is nearly identical to the original one and the only difference consists on giving factor 5 a score that is different from the one S.U.F. assigned to it: if a testimony through letter or journal are the sources of a report we will give as score 0.05, while if an UFO magazine is the source we will give 0,10. As the rest the computerized version of S.U.F.'s credibility coefficient remained without any changes.

In conclusion the program computes the coefficients of the well-known Probability/Strangeness diagram, conceived by J. A. Hynek. In this case we inserted a modification that, in our opinion, could improve the abilities the diagram has on fixing the data in an exact scheme. We thought to exploit the tipology of UFO events supplying a "scale" that could be able to direct, briefly, the choice of the computer-operator. By such a way he can base himself on the kind of sighting that he wishes to analyze, on awarding the value of strangeness. We carried out the "tipological scale" by holding in due consideration the elasticity it must be subject to, as even cases of the same tipology can propose situations with a different strangeness.

In the program we indicated by the symbol "+" those cases which are stranger than others, in a same kind. In this way it will be possibile to have a CE 0 or a CE 0+, a CE 3 and a CE 3+ and so on,just by virtue of the above-mentioned elasticity. Moreover, speaking for probability, we chose to refer to the considered score, that we divided into 9 quadrants of the diagram. This choice is motivated by a simple consideration : according to our proposal, the highest score of credibility we can give a report is 1, leaving out of consideration the fact that a case could involve a UFO or a IFO. Such a value - 1 - should occupy the tenth column of the diagram, but in

our computerized version it occupies the ninth column. Why ? The reason is very simple: if on one hand we can have the certainty - 1 - that an event happened, on the other hand we won't know with absolute certainty (on the contrary we would have a definitive, mathematical proof) if a UFO or a IFO produced the event itself (till now we don't dispose such a proof, but only probabilities) and so the tenth column of probability remains a merely theoretical border.
Going back to possibilities of employment of E.D.A., we have to say that the program can be used within the limits we already mentioned. These limitations aren't imputable - it is obvious - to the program itself or the methods of calculus we employed, rather to the impossibility, sometimes,to take the technical measurings on the place of a supposed sighting. So it's evident that the program (as regards the valutations of distance and size) mostly applies to "close encounters", offering several hints in these terms.
As the rest we can't think to draw exact data from vague reports (as L.N. are by their nature).

Sergio Bianchi

GSE Record Section

Note:

Further information about E.D.A., G.S.E. or details quoted in this article can be made avaiable from :
G.S.E. - c/o Luigi Di Ruzza - Via degli Eroi, 9 - 03043 CASSINO (FR) - I T A L Y

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(1) Boncompagni,Conti,Coppetti,Lamperi,Ricci,Sani (1980)
"UFO in Italia - L'ondata del 1954"
Corrado Tedeschi Editore, Firenze, 38

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Offer of Software

A nice software developed by Marco Bottaini for the storage of Italian casuistry on local basis is now available for Apple IIc. The database - beyond usual fields for fundamental data - is able to establish as many fields as you wish for sources. There is also a graphic generator able to present (on video or printer) bar and pie charts coming from some statistical analyses. At the moment, nine different files (relating to the nine provinces of Tuscany, the region where Bottaini lives) are available, with a total of 814 cases.
The whole software (two 5" 1/4 disks), both in the Italian and the English version, is now offered at 20,000 Italian lire. For non-Apple users, we offer also the complete print-out of this very interesting catalogue, including statistics and graphs. It is a 82 page report, now avaiable at 14,000 Italian lire.

A database for entity casesccn0

- Checkpoint number one -

by Denys Breysse

Denys Breysse is a French researcher,living near
Paris, who is developing a new very interesting
work on entity cases by a computerized database.
One of the chief aims is the search for constant
motifs inside the witnesses' tales, as proposed by
folklore students and by the English researcher
J.Hind (1). Breysse is author of a very interesting
study about the duration of sightings in relation
to the fundamental UFO/IFO question (2). He is own
address is :
9a rue St. Exupery # F-92160 Antony # FRANCE

1.   MEANS.

1.1 Basic material

It is made by a maximum of "humanoid" cases.
The expression humanoid is not entirely adapted and it is only used
owing to easiness : some cases could talk about beings with animal
appearance, for example.
Only two criteria have been used to select cases.
-      The case must (explicity or not) to be related with UFO
phenomenon (explicity, for example, if Mr. X sees two beings going down
from a bright disc;implicity if in the witness' mind or according to
the investigator or the source reporting the experience, it is related
with the UFO phenomenon). For these reasons, Virgin Mary experiences
related in a religious book will not be taken into account, but we'll
keep the experiences of "hairy big ape" if the writer reports them for
showing the UFO wave of the same period.
-      The case has to be detailed in a minimum way. Have to be known :
the date even not exactly), the location and the number of witnesses.
We'll not keep entries like "Some beings of great height coming away
when witnesses approach them have been seen several times within last
days in the region of N.". We can accept cases where location and
number of witnesses are only approximatively known only if these cases
are sufficiently detailed otherwise.
Both explained (surely or not) and unexplained cases will be used.

REMARK -
These criteria of selection are arbitrary. But they have been
explicitly and consciuosly adopted. Excepted that, as any criterion,
they may introduce a bias into the data, the matter for their existence
is the wish of getting a material exploitable afterwards.
-      It remains a risk of accumulating many and many useless cases,

because too poorly detailed. So we'll join to each case an indication
about the quantity of information (number of characteristics meaningly
coded).
-    The sole cases which verify the criteria but which will not be
coded (at least in a first stage) are those where a quasi similar
phenomenon (in its appearance and in its proceeding) occurs very soon
after in an immediate neighbourhood, such as few hours or few days
later. The aim of such an idea is to avoid of accumulating non
significant doubles.

1.2 The Hardware.

     Personal micro-computer Amstrad CPC 464 (42K RAM) with two disc
drives (3") for the data storage and an Amstrad 80 columns printer.

1.3 The Delays.

     My own professional job prevents me from giving exact times about
the end of this work. However, I spend the biggest part of my UFO spare
time - approximately ten hours per week - with it. I'll need a whole
year for coding a significant number of cases and obtaining the first
statistical results (cf. Aims).
I intend to do a regular checkpoint about the advancing stage of the
work, communicating it to every interested researcher.

2.   THE AIMS -

2.1 At Short Time.

-    Collection of data (hand and clear file), reading several UFO
books and magazines (begun in 1984 : 1,000 cases or so collected
today).
-    Final writing of coding booklet.
The first writing of Becassine has been modificated, following a first
experiment of cimputerized coding and knowing a few other coding
experiments developed in the past (cf. coding cases).
-    Programming the coding process.
It has to be entirely interactive. The aim of the process is to be as
clear as possible (to decrease the risks of bias in choosing
modalities) and fairly fast. To change data for a given coded case has
to be quick and easy.

2.2 At Mean Time.

-    Coding cases.
It is related with a previous collection of a large corpus of cases
(even though coded every cases will remain "handly" and "clearly"
avaiable).
-    Programming the software to operate on the data.

2.3 At Long Time.

       We wish to carry out :

**   Lists. Selections.
-      Coded lists of all cases.
-      Selection following any criterion (or criteria) of   a   group   of
cases (an example : all Italian cases happened in 1954 with animal
effects) for sorted lists or more detailed studies (see later).
-      Detailed and "clear" lists of a part of the cases.
Each print-out will be avaiable to anyone.

**   Descriptive statistics.
-      Calculation of frequencies for each value of modalities.
-      Giving results on figures (scrren or printer).

**   Factorial analysis.
-      Study of the internal coherence of the corpus, for instance :
-      searching possible associations among modalities.
-      searching possible discriminant variables.
-      searching one (or several) possible type of groups of cases.
It is, according to me, the most interesting part of the work and I
need to think about it before starting. All your opinions and
suggestions about such a subject will be welcomed. I'll do a checkpoint
when my ideas will be a little more detailed.

3.   THE LIMITS -

       Beyond those depending upon the time I'll be able to spend with
this work, the chief limitations are related with the tool coding
(writing of the codebook and codification of cases).
However, I hope they will not be so important to prevent any
interesting result to be obtained.

                                                      (February 1985)

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      Using UFO motifs
      MAGONIA 2, 3-8
(2)   D.Breysse   (1985)
      La duree des phenomenes OVNI : aide a' la discernabilite'
      OVNI PRESENCE 9, 32, 22-34

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— Thanks —

We would like to remark the valuable contribution of Mr. Francesco
Alfieri (Catanzaro Lido - Italy) in trascribing Andersen's long paper
through the "Easy Script" word-processor. Our sincere thanks to
Francesco, which help is very appreciated in this "one-man Newsletter".