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Do Your Own SETI Search

From: Stig_Agermose@online.pol.dk (Stig Agermose)
Date: Thu, 4 Sep 1997 04:17:27 +0200
Fwd Date: Thu, 04 Sep 1997 08:18:38 -0400
Subject: Do Your Own SETI Search

>From The Philadelphia Enquirer August 28 1997. URL:

<http://www.phillynews.com:80/inquirer/97/Aug/28/business/DUDE28.htm>

A chance to explore for life in outer space

Once in a while, we come across some things that are so cool we have to share them with you.

We have seen things such as the solar-power cells that fit like a sleeve over your laptop. But after investigating the Web site plus calling the folks at the SETI Institute, we found one incredible free opportunity for anyone who is connected to the Internet to make a significant contribution to finding radio signals from outer space.

It is one of the most positive uses of the Internet we have seen in a long time.

Starting with beta testing this fall and set to launch in the spring of 1998, SETI@Home will debut on the Internet, available to anyone who wants to help professional astronomers search the radio waves for signals from outer space.

SETI@Home is an experiment that organizers say will ``harness the power of hundreds of thousands of Internet-connected computers in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence' or SETI.

Basically SETI@Home works like a screen saver. When it is active, the program will automatically download a small bit of radio-telescope data from the Arecibo Radio Telescope in Puerto Rico, the one featured in this summer's movie Contact. After processing the information for a few hours or days, the program on your computer will return the results to the server at SETI@Home.

You can see the progress of the processing several ways, from the easy-to-understand Science Mode to the Earth Progress Mode, which will show how many personal computers, in real time, are helping to process the radio signals around the world.

What is really cool about this experiment is that anyone with a computer will have a chance, small though it may be, to be the first to detect a signal from another world.

Why are SETI and other astronomers endorsing this unique project? For one thing, the federal government canceled funding for this kind of scientific research earlier in the decade, so SETI is relying on private citizens and corporations to keep it going. Also, the data to

be processed are backlogged, so the project needs all the help it can get.

As two educators and amateur astronomers, we think this project is a great idea and will accomplish several goals. Real science can be done on private computers; people around the world can be inspired to learn about the universe; and maybe someone will be lucky enough to discover a signal from other beings.

To find out how any person or organization with a computer can get involved, go to the Web site

<http://www.bigscience.com/setiathome.html>

To learn about the SETI project, and for information about the movie Contact, plus hundreds of educational and entertaining astronomy links, visit

<http://www.seti.org>

And if we happen to get e-mailed technical questions from another world, we'll try our best to answer them, as with these:

(snip)

Write to the CompuDudes in care of The Inquirer, Business News Department, Box 8263, Philadelphia 19101. Or, by e-mail, at: compududes@phillynews.com

The CompuDudes can also be heard on ``Kid's Corner'' and the ``CompuDudes Hour'' tonight and every Thursday night starting at 7:30 on WXPB-FM (88.5).

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