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Reason For Optimism In ET Search - Scientist

From: **Stig Agermose** <Stig.Agermose@online.pol.dk>
Date: Mon, 24 Aug 1998 14:40:42 +0200
Fwd Date: Mon, 24 Aug 1998 12:29:52 -0400
Subject: Reason For Optimism In ET Search - Scientist

Source:Business Wire.

Stig

Scientist: Reason for Optimism in ET Search

Friday, August 21 6:20 PM ET

BOSTON (BUSINESS WIRE) - SETINOW reports that scientists conducting Searches for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) recently received good news: ET signals may be numerous because the transmitting technology is easy to develop. In the latest issue of the journal SetiQuest, Boston University professor and radio astronomer Nathan Cohen shows how a device called an 'aperture engine' could be used to transmit across the Galaxy.

SETI uses radio telescopes to attempt reception of radio transmissions from ET's from distant stars in the galaxy and beyond. No ET signals have been found to date. SETI is considered a legitimate scientific enterprise and is not connected with UFO studies or alleged alien abductions.

A cosmic signal's transmitted power must be made very large. Traditional thinking dictates doing this by using a powerful and expensive transmitter or through the magnification or 'gain' from a very large antenna dish. This produces an inefficient and expensive technological tradeoff.

Cohen says the two are likely to be linked as an optimized, aperture engine. The transmitting antenna also is a stellar power collector and transmitter module array, combining three key functions in one physical area, with high efficiency. It would look like a collection of flat panels with multiple layers. A typical aperture engine would be a dozen acres on a side for transmission to Earth from the other side of the Galaxy, 70,000 light years away. For closer transmissions out to 1000 light years it would be slightly bigger than a football field. The closest star is about 4 light years away.

The total number of ET civilizations spread across the Galaxy is a matter of speculation. Guesses run between 1 and 100,000,000. No matter how big or small the actual number, Cohen suggests that there is a good chance a vast majority of them above a modest technological threshold are capable of trying to contact us or others with radio transmissions from aperture engines. Even distant and humble ET's will have the chance for a cosmic

contact. Cohen adds: "ET contact is not just the plaything of the few super-smart civilizations, but even the far more numerous ones at our level or slightly above it." Asked to speculate on the number of detectable ET's Cohen guessed between 100 and 100,000. "But we have no useful data which constrains that number. Until you find any ET's and survey the sky correctly no one knows", he cautioned.

Cohen also cautions that the optimized effort on the transmit side has to be matched by one on our end, and that the conversation is one-way, because of the great distances and time scales. "For a chance to find even one ET signal, you need patience, the largest radio telescopes and to look at thousands of stars at a time", explains Cohen, "also you have to be smart enough to know that the changing, thin plasma of space requires a special spread spectrum method called polychromatic SETI." At the moment, says Cohen, ongoing Earth SETI's are receive-only and fall substantially short of optimized efforts. The most comprehensive survey has looked at less than 700 stars out of 500 billion in the galaxy. "The amazing thing is not that we've found nothing so far, but that we're not doing the receive effort the right way." Cohen believes SETI will be successful within a generation of changing its observing strategies.

Copies of the SetiQuest issue may be purchased through its website:

<http://www.setiquest.com>

SETINOW sponsors dissemination of important breakthroughs in the SETI through its in-construction web site, scheduled for a September debut.

Contact: SETINOW Rick Gordon or Phil Salkind 617-489-6207

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