



Photo courtesy of Dr. Stuart A. Kingsley www.coseti.org

SETI: Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence

Since the dawn of time, a fundamental question has captured our imagination: Is there other intelligent life in the universe, and if so, can it help us with our math homework? Let's start with the first part of this question.

For many of us, wondering about extraterrestrial (meaning "beyond Earth") intelligence is something we do mainly from the comfort of our living room couches as we watch sci-fi television shows like Star Trek, X-Files, and Third Rock from the Sun, and rent movies like Star Wars, Contact, and Space Jam. But for SETI scientists, curiosity about who and what else is out there is a never-ending quest for evidence.

Scientific searches for alien civilizations started in the 1950's, but they were very limited because of the technology available. Space was still very much regarded as the great beyond, and most of us thought of ourselves as hopelessly earthbound. (Keep in mind that Neil Armstrong didn't even set foot on the moon until 1969.) In 1981, the modern search for extraterrestrial intelligence seemed about to begin. NASA was building the world's largest radio receiver to probe the universe for intelligence (no, it wasn't so they could listen to really loud '80's music!). Unfortunately, a U.S. Senator from Nevada pulled the plug on the project before it could be completed. Nonetheless, scientists have persevered in their efforts to search for intelligent life.

Today, the SETI project includes researchers around the globe, as far away as Australia and as close to home as Louisiana State University. SETI astronomers include men and women from many different countries, sharing their knowledge and data to work toward the same goal. Using vast arrays of radio and optical telescopes, SETI teams scour the universe for unusual signals, eagerly awaiting the day when a signal suggests an intelligent source. And if that day ever comes, just think of the TV shows and movies it will inspire—on our planet and possibly even others!

For more information on SETI, click on one of these links:

[SETI poetry??](#)

[Information on a SETI project called SETI@home](#)

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