

## IAA Study Group Status Report

### **Responsible Commission:**

Commission 1 (Space Physical Sciences)  
and Commission 6 as an involved commission.

### **Study Number and Title:**

SETI Permanent Study Group 1.3

### **Short Study Description** (repeat from Study Group Proposal):

SETI is an acronym for the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence. The primary goal is to examine all aspects of possible future contact with extraterrestrial civilizations, with special reference to international issues and activities. These aspects include technical efforts to find evidence for extraterrestrial intelligence as well as the social consequences of such a discovery. In addition, this group promotes the interest and eventual involvement of students in this work, primarily through education initiatives, the Internet, and the mass media.

### **Progress in past six months:**

The SETI Permanent Study Group (PSG) has, in the past year, has continued to work on, and devise pragmatic solutions for, several substantive issues relevant to its activities within the IAA, as well as producing study materials bearing on the future use of the lunar far side.

We have continued to decide how to deal with the disappointing fact that no major publication of SETI I or SETI II session papers has been made since 1999. The PSG has asked Claudio Maccone, Carol Oliver, John Elliott, and Seth Shostak to petition Pierre Mollette, editor of special editions of *Acta Astronautica*, to publish those papers deemed worthy of distribution “as is”. As noted in earlier reports, the difficulties with publishing have been a disincentive for members to attend the IAC.

A second major issue addressed, yet again was the matter of a draft Second Protocol bearing on the reaction to a SETI detection. The current draft, which is on file at COPUOS, states that no transmission intended for extraterrestrial reception should be made without “international consultation.” The PSG has had a year-long debate on this subject, as many members felt that this was both an unenforceable and undesirable statement, putting the SETI community in the position of trying to dissuade the world at large from activities that are thoroughly legal. A straw vote was conducted over many months to gauge the general feeling of the PSG membership: the overwhelming preference was to change the second protocol to be congruent with the first, which states that no transmission *in response* to a detected signal should be made without international consultation. A vote on this matter during the annual meeting concurred with the straw vote, and unanimously endorsed changing the draft second protocol accordingly. This matter came to the PSG’s attention again in Valencia, and the decision made in 2006 in Fukuoka was explicitly endorsed by yet another vote of the Group. A revised version of

this revised Second Protocol will be presented to the IAA in March, with the intention of replacing the COPUOS version now on file at that organization.

The idea of organizing a special meeting dealing with active SETI – the deliberate transmission of signals to putative cosmic recipients – was also endorsed by the Group.

At the Valencia, 2006 meeting, approximately twelve papers were presented in two SETI sessions. For the first time, a special invited lecture for the SETI II session, the Billingham Cutting Edge Lecture (in honor of SETI pioneer, John Billingham) was initiated, with speaker Steven Dick (of NASA). SETI PSG member Allen Tough has generously offered to fund speakers for this special lecture. The speaker for future Billingham lectures will be chosen by vote of the SETI PSG.

**Website Study Information up to date?** (Study Group Membership, Study Plan and Schedule):

The Web site at <http://www.setileague.org/iaaseti/index.html> continues to contain updated information regarding the SETI Permanent Study Group.

**Issues requiring resolution?** (recommend approach):

(1) See above: publication, (2) affordability of the Congress, (3) revised second Draft Protocol, and (4) establishment of subgroup to study feasibility of meeting on active SETI.

**Product Deliveries on Schedule?** (If modified explain rationale):

Yes.

**Study Team Member Changes?** (List any Study Team Members that you wish to discontinue, and provide names plus contact coordinates of any Members you wish to add on the second page of this Study Update form.) Note: Complete contact information including email, tel. and fax must be provided for all additions. Only Members with complete contact information will be listed and receive formal appointment letters from the IAA Secretariat.)

**Name of person providing Study Group Status** (Study Group Chair or Co-Chair):

Seth Shostak, Chair, SETI Permanent Study Group

**Status Report Date:**

March 16, 2007

## Study Team Membership Changes

Effectivity Date: Immediately

### **Discontinue:**

Name: Valeria Ascheri  
Current email address: [ascheriv@tiscali.it](mailto:ascheriv@tiscali.it)

Name: Harvey Butcher  
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Name: Vladimir Pletser  
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Name: Salvatore Santoli  
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### **Add:**

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