

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Simone Paddock
(707) 829-0515 ext. 330
simone@oreilly.com
<http://www.oreilly.com>

Hello? Is Anybody Out There?

Sebastopol, CA—"It is widely believed that this century will see the discovery of life elsewhere in the universe. But what about 'intelligence'? And if we do contact extraterrestrials, will any meaningful communication be possible?" Sir Arthur C. Clarke's contemplation most concisely articulates a question that has enthralled human kind for many decades and has spawned programs like the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) as a tool to seek and find a definitive answer. In the book *Beyond Contact: A Guide to SETI and Communicating with Alien Civilizations*, (O'Reilly, US \$24.95) author Brian McConnell explores in-depth the search for intelligent life in the universe and how inter-stellar communication could work.

Many people have argued that once primitive life has evolved, natural selection will inevitably cause it to advance toward intelligence and technology. For forty years now, SETI has combed the skies in search of signals from such life. "There is nothing in the laws of physics that forbids the formation of life on other planets," McConnell says. "One of the most important things we've learned in the 20th century was that if something wasn't forbidden, it was probably happening somewhere. Black holes, once thought to be a fantasy, are a good example. Just because something is weird and difficult for us to comprehend, doesn't mean it's not possible."

McConnell continues, "If SETI does succeed, which could happen next week or a century from now, we may be exposed to information from extraterrestrial civilizations. What we may learn from this, or how this would affect our own civilization, is anyone's guess. Being prepared and knowing what types of communication will be possible, is a good place to start."

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90 SHERMAN STREET • CAMBRIDGE, MA 02140 • (800) 775-7731 • (617) 354-5800 • FAX (617) 661-1116
info@oreilly.com <http://www.oreilly.com>

Beyond Contact introduces readers to:

- The history of SETI research, traditional radio astronomy, the search for intelligence in optical wavelengths (known as Optical SETI, or OSETI), and the SETI@home project
- An overview of the Drake Equation and the Rare Earth Hypothesis, which scientists use to estimate the number of planets in our galaxy that could harbor intelligent, communicative life forms
- How signals are sent and received over interstellar distances. The author explains the principles of signal and image processing, and how SETI researchers identify and process analog signals using Fourier transforms to see how the power in a signal is distributed across different frequencies
- How to build a general-purpose symbolic language for sending signals, and even computer programs, with present-day SETI equipment.

The author also shows how SETI research—though often thought to be a mere flight of fancy—has spawned technological improvements in astronomy, computers, and wireless communications.

“The book does not speculate about when we will detect a signal, or what we would learn from another civilization,” McConnell says. “What the book does is describe systems for communication, all of which are derived from technology that is already in use today.” And with over 2.8 million public participants and extensive funding, SETI is a pretty good start.

Advanced Praise for “Beyond Contact”:

“This fascinating book explores all the possible lines of approach to a challenge, upon whose outcome may one day depend the future of our own civilization.”—Sir Arthur C. Clarke, author of “2001: A Space Odyssey”

“‘Beyond Contact’ summarizes well what is the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. I recommend it for anyone as an entry level book on the subject.”--Stephane Dumas, Physicist

“A thoughtful and beautifully detailed treatise on the search for extraterrestrial civilizations. If you are an earthling or extraterrestrial wondering ‘Is anybody out there?’ read this book.”—Dan Wertheimer, chief scientist, [SETI@home](#), University of California, Berkeley

—MORE—

“A refreshingly even-handed treatment of one of the greatest puzzles of our age, the question of our apparent loneliness in the universe.”—David Brin, author of “The Postman,” “Earth,” and “The Transparent Society”

“My colleagues and I at JPL are working on an interplanetary Internet. Brian McConnell takes the next step towards interstellar communication. If you ever wondered whether it REALLY would be possible to communicate with extraterrestrials, read this book.”
—Vint Cerf, Internet pioneer and visiting scientist at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory

“In ‘Beyond Contact,’ the author goes beyond simple bit streams, showing a sophisticated programming environment designed to be transmitted to an alien civilization. It is the most creative and useful transmission suggestion I have ever seen. The author’s explanation on its own is appropriate for astronomy, computer programming, and linguistics.”—Charlie Schick, science writer/editor

“The most exciting and comprehensive practical SETI book in a generation. Brian McConnell’s book will enthrall a new generation of SETI enthusiasts. ‘Beyond Contact’ will surely inspire others to mount their own SETI research.”—Dr. Stuart A. Kingsley, director, Columbus Optical SETI Observatory

“Remarkably fresh ideas on how to achieve contact. Wide-ranging, engrossing, enjoyable. This book is definitely a winner!”—Dr. Allen Tough, coordinator of the Web-based “Invitation to ETI”

“This thought provoking book ventures boldly where I fear to tread.”—Kent Cullers, Signal Detection Team Leader, Director for SETI Research and Development, SETI Institute

Chapter 7, *Lightwave (Laser) Communication*, and Chapter 12, *Binary DNA*, are available free online at:

<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/alien/chapter/index.html>

An article by Brian McConnell, “Anticryptography: The Next Frontier in Computer Science” can be read at:

http://www.oreilly.com/news/seti_0201.html

For an article about David Anderson of SETI@Home, see:

<http://www.openp2p.com/pub/a/p2p/2001/02/15/anderson.html>

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For more information about the book, including Table of Contents, index, author bio, and samples, see:

<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/alien/>

For a cover graphic in jpeg format, go to:

ftp://ftp.ora.com/pub/graphics/book_covers/hi-res/0596000375.jpg

More information about SETI can also be found at the SETI Institute Online site, and at SETI@home:

<http://www.seti-inst.edu/Welcome.html>

<http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/>

For more information or to subscribe to the O'Reilly elists, go to:

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Beyond Contact

A Guide to SETI and Communicating with Alien Civilizations

By Brian McConnell

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