

Publisher's Page

H. Paul Shuch, Ph.D.^{1*}

The SETI League, Inc., P.O. Box 555, 433 Liberty Street, Little Ferry, NJ, 07643 USA

The photon, it has long been recognized, is the fastest spaceship known to man. It travels relatively unimpeded through the interstellar medium at the highest possible velocity, the speed of light. It is trivial to generate, simple to detect, and has the ability to carry massive amounts of information from point A to point B at nearly negligible cost. Thus, it comes as no surprise to readers of *Contact in Context* that the whole SETI enterprise is predicated on the ubiquity of photonic communication. As the poet wrote:

*For satellite messages now can be sent so much faster and cheaper and safer
Than writing them down and then driving around to deliver those pieces of paper²*

The cost of sending tons of mass hurtling through interstellar space is daunting, SETIzens reason, while interstellar contact through electromagnetic means may be a long established mode, its data stream just waiting to be tapped by emerging civilizations like our own. It is significant that this same premise motivated the establishment of this, the first juried academic periodical in the SETI discipline to exist solely in virtual form.

The scientific Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence has enjoyed two fine peer-reviewed print journals in its four-decade history. *Cosmic Search*, edited by pioneer radio astronomer John Kraus of Ohio State University, managed to crank out thirteen stellar issues in the 1970s, before the costs of felling forests and pulping paper forced its premature demise. For publisher Carl Helmers, the death knell for *SETIQuest* in the 1990s was sounded by the postal service, in the form of rising rates. In both cases, "writing them down and then driving around to deliver those pieces of paper" proved the scholarly journals' undoing.

Yet, the need remained for a scientific forum which focuses specifically on the search for intelligent (as opposed to merely microbial) life in the universe. Why not, reasoned The SETI League's strategic planning committee, fulfill that need through the very medium which we are hoping ETI might employ in distributing *Encyclopaedia Galactica*: electronic communications?

And so, we are proud to announce *Contact in Context*, SETI's first all-electronic journal. Twice a year, under the skillful leadership of editor-in-chief Professor Rob Lodder and editor Dr. Allen Tough, we hope to bring you the latest scholarly papers in the areas of microwave and optical spectrometry, electrical engineering, technology development and assessment, chemistry, physics, mathematics and statistics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, futures studies, and history – all the fields of study that make SETI so highly interdisciplinary. This first issue will give you an idea about our intended scope, and mix. We encourage submissions by professional and amateur scientists alike, on SETI-related hardware, software, search strategies and philosophy.

Contact in Context is your journal, coming your way at the speed of thought. Today, we invite you to communicate with your peers.

Tomorrow, with your cosmic companions.

1. Executive Director, The SETI League, Inc., publishers of *Contact In Context*.

* Author to whom correspondence should be addressed. Email:n6tx@setileague.org

2. Shuch, H. Paul, Extraterrestrial Relays. In *Sing More Songs of SETI*, The SETI League, Inc., 2001.