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The Next Steps (A4)
SETI 2: SETI and Society (2)

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ANTICIPATING AND MITIGATING THE RISKS OF MISINFORMATION FOLLOWING A SETI
DETECTION EVENT.

Abstract

SETI organizations rightfully focus on efforts to search for artificial signals. Much work has been done to develop protocols for confirming or debunking candidate signals, as well as to rank discoveries by their level of societal impact (see the Rio scale). However less effort has been expended to understand the risks of a detection event.

Passive SETI is widely assumed to be low risk, but recent experience with misinformation (see Covid-19 and associated conspiracy theories) suggests that these risks may be underestimated. In this presentation, we discuss the likely incentives for bad actors to spread misinformation related to a SETI detection event, and steps that SETI organizations can take to mitigate them.