

53rd IAA SYMPOSIUM ON THE SEARCH FOR EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE (SETI) –
The Next Steps (A4)
SETI 2: SETI and Society (2)

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SETI AND THE MEDIA: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Abstract

According to a collection of surveys, more than half of all those surveyed around the world believe we are not alone in the universe. The belief persists amid a seismic shift in the media landscape as media actors evolved and morphed online over the past three decades. Today, social media are driving fake news, polarisation, and alternative realities. Divisions have deepened across whole societies, and conspiracy theories abound. More recently, generative Artificial Intelligence unleashed new challenges in communicating the SETI endeavour among public audiences but also created opportunities to help direct conversations, particularly in a post-detection event. Understanding and utilising these considerable media changes cannot be underestimated in terms of what happens after news of a potential detection. This paper reviews and summarises previous thinking on communicating a SETI post-detection event, where we are now, and where we may be heading in the next five to ten years.