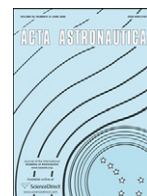




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

# Acta Astronautica

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/actaastro](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/actaastro)

## Editorial

# Are we alone?

### Editorial comment

In the current issue, P. Ailleris summarizes the knowledge gained from 50 years of UFO research [1] and suggests a new initiative for the identification of UFOs. This review article on UFO field experiments is both well written and informative and provides an excellent summary on past activities to identify extraterrestrials on the earth.

The whole field of SETI is in a dilemma. Many experts in the field assume it is highly likely that intelligent life exists in our universe in addition to the human race. Some are even working to develop codes to communicate with these civilisations. However, due to the barriers of distance and time it appears extremely unlikely that these civilisations can contact us.

If an additional civilisation exists it is most unlikely that it exists in our Milky Way. However, as there are uncountable Milky Ways in the universe, civilisations may exist in other Milky Ways, which are millions or even billions of light years away.

When we look for UFOs, we assume that extraterrestrials are here already. As travelling from a planet that is thousands or even billions of light years away from our own planet takes time (even if such a civilisation would

be able to travel at the speed of light), such a civilisation would have to have been far more developed than our present civilisation is when they decided thousands to billions of years ago to visit us. In addition, visiting earth by another civilisation with UFOs indicates that this civilisation had a reason to visit the Earth.

In summary, we can only speculate on the possible existence of extraterrestrials, but on a higher level than 50 years ago. As it is unlikely that we will ever successfully make contact with extraterrestrials, although they may exist somewhere in the universe, funding agencies should be aware that chances for success of such a search are near null.

### References

- [1] P. Ailleris, The lure of local SETI: Fifty years of field experiments, This issue, 2011 p. 2 –15.

*Editor-in-Chief*

R. Gerzer

*German Aerospace Center, Institute of Aerospace Medicine,  
Linder Hoehe, 51147 Cologne, Germany  
E-mail address: rupert.gerzer@dlr.de*