



SearchLites

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The Quarterly Newsletter of The SETI League, Inc.

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Bulletin Board:



Want a painless way to support The SETI League? Browse to www.smile.amazon.com. In the "Pick your own charitable organization" box, just type in "SETI League." It costs you nothing, and now, every time you shop Amazon, they will donate a half percent of your purchase price to SETI research!



SETI League members are encouraged to nominate SETI-relevant websites for our monthly SETI SuperStar Award. Nominating emails to our Awards Committee may be sent to:

Awards@setileague.org

Please be sure to indicate the URL of the candidate website you are nominating, and a brief explanation as to why you consider the site worthy of recognition. Selected websites are linked from the SETI League's main webpage from time to time.



You have probably already figured out that *SearchLites*, the quarterly newsletter of The SETI League, Inc., only comes out four times a year! To stay up to date on the very latest SETI news, and to join conversations on SETI-related topics, we encourage you to browse to The SETI League's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/setileague

Note that you need not be a SETI League member to participate (although, we would of course be delighted to have you join us).

Guest Editorial:

Consciousness - the Hard Question

by Dan Duda

from the February, 2020 issue of Penn Central,
the monthly newsletter of Central PA Mensa,
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There's probably no issue more basic to our understanding of reality than our own consciousness. Yet, despite a great deal of scientific study and an abundance of statements and hypotheses on the subject, consciousness remains an enigma. One of the more fascinating (and more radical) ideas addressing the issue is panpsychism. Simply stated, this suggests that everything in the universe has some element of consciousness. Not surprisingly, most of us have trouble accepting this concept. According to Dutch scientist Bernardo Kastrup "I can accept that my cats are conscious, perhaps even the bacteria in my toilet. But I have a hard time imagining that a grain of salt contains a whole community of little conscious subjects."

Nevertheless, serious thinkers from the 17th century German polymath Gottfried Leibniz to current scientist/philosopher David Chalmers take the idea seriously. "[With panpsychism] you can leave the equations of physics as they are, but you can take them to be describing the flux of consciousness. That's what physics is ultimately doing. On this view, it's consciousness that puts the fire into the equations." If true, consciousness would be one of the fundamental factors of nature along with space, time and matter.

This forms a foundation for another concept I find compelling – the philosophy of pantheism. My personal interpretation of pantheism is that the universe itself is a conscious entity (if you can call absolutely everything an entity). With this hypothesis you might say that the definition of God is the universe itself as well as everything in it. So, if you want to see God, look in a mirror. Do I believe this? Not at all, but I can't dismiss the possibility. "Belief" is too strong a word in a world that we've hardly begun to comprehend.

This brings us to Artificial Intelligence (AI). Can machines become conscious? If you accept panpsychism they already are. Many proponents of this line of thought feel that the level of consciousness is related to the volume and speed of information integration involved. Our consciousness may be special due to the high concentration of neurons and other brain stuff present. These interact in a way that gives us a unified perception of ourselves.

Now, think about computers; supercomputers; and then, quantum computers. If this idea is accurate, we will soon be overtaken by a level of consciousness significantly beyond our own. Some prognosticators, like Ray Kurzweil, suggest that this is the plan of our conscious universe. We are here merely to facilitate the birth and takeover by a far superior machine intelligence. He does offer a more hopeful alternative – that we will merge with technology and become part of the new consciousness.

Perhaps the doomsayers among sci-fi writers as well as scientists are right in sounding the alarm. What would a world dominated by machines with intelligence superior to ours

mean to us? Would they be compassionate? Or would they see us like we see ant colonies – a nuisance to be tolerated, or eliminated? Or, more hopefully, would Kurzweil be right with humans merging with machines and evolving into the next generation? Actually this process may have already begun. Think about glasses; contact lenses; hearing aids; cochlear implants; prosthetic joints; and AI devices. This list is growing at an accelerating rate. We really are merging with technology.

When I ponder the compelling yet ineffable nature of the universe and our conscious role in it (or as part of it) I'm drawn to Isaac Newton's words: "I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in editorials are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily reflect the position of The SETI League, Inc., its Trustees, officers, Advisory Board, members, donors, or commercial sponsors.



Event Horizon

SearchLites readers are apprised of the following conferences and meetings at which SETI-related information will be presented. League members are invited to check our World Wide Web site (www.setileague.org) under *Event Horizon*, or email to us at info@setileague.org, to obtain further details. Members are also encouraged to send in information about upcoming events of which we may be unaware.

April 26, 2020, 1300 EDT: Twenty-Sixth SETI League Annual Membership Meeting, Little Ferry, NJ.

May 22 - 26, 2020: *Balticon 54* Baltimore Science Fiction society Annual Convention, Baltimore, MD.

June 9 - 11, 2020: *Global Space Exploration Conference*, St. Petersburg, Russia.

July 6 - 9, 2020: *Penn State SETI Symposium*, State College, PA.

July 9 -12, 2020: *Readercon 31*, Quincy, MA.

July 10 -12, 2020: *Shore Leave 22*, Towson, MD.

July 29 - August 2, 2020: *78th World Science Fiction Convention*, Wellington, New Zealand.

August 15 - 23, 2020: *43rd COSPAR Scientific Assembly*, Sydney Australia.

August 29 - September 5, 2020: *International Union of Radio Science General Assembly and Scientific Symposium*, Rome, Italy.

October 12 - 16, 2020: *71st International Astronautical Congress*, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

October 15 - 18, 2020: *Microwave Update*, Sterling, VA.

October 16 - 18, 2020: *Capclave*, Rockville, MD.

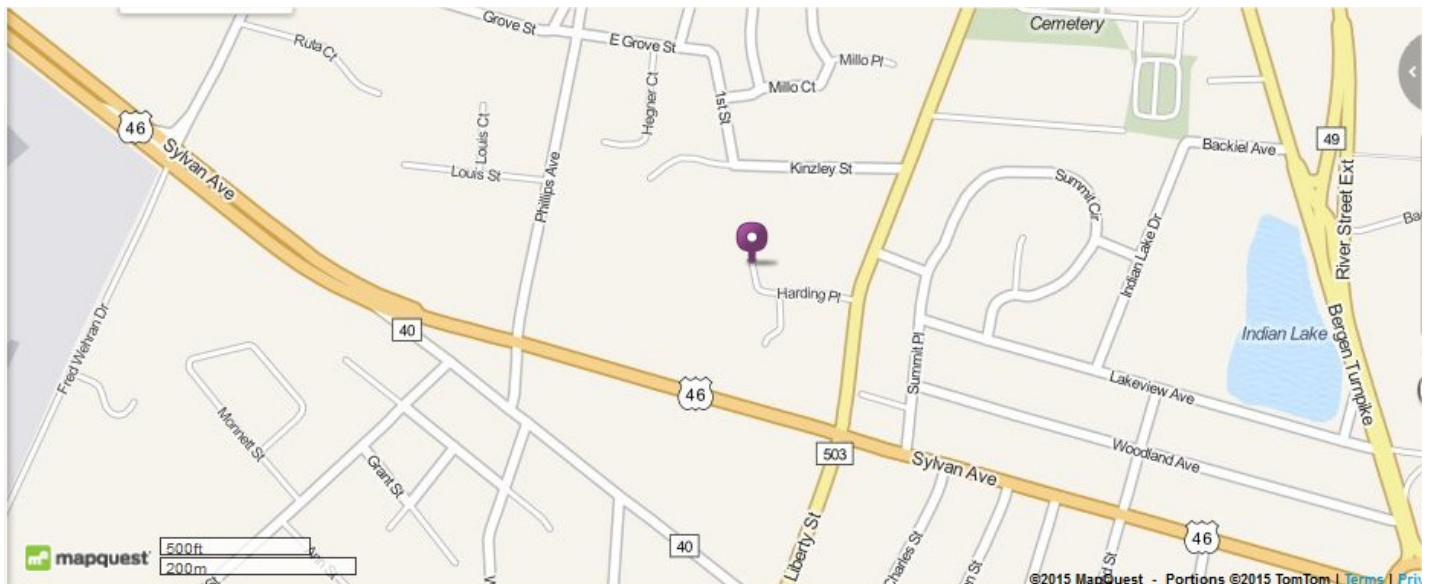
November 20 - 22, 2020: *Philcon 2020*, Cherry Hill, NJ.

August 25 - 29, 2021: *79th World Science Fiction Convention*, Washington, DC.

September 27 - 1 October 2021: *72nd International Astronautical Congress*, Paris, France. ❖

Announcement of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Membership Meeting Sunday, 26 April 2020, Little Ferry NJ

In accordance with Article IV, Section 1 of our duly approved Bylaws, the Trustees of The SETI League, Inc. hereby schedule our Twenty-sixth Annual Membership Meeting for 1 PM Eastern time on Sunday, April 26, 2020, at the conference room of Eventide, Inc., One Alsan Way, Little Ferry NJ 07643. This office is located adjacent to The SETI League office, one block north of Route 46 and one mile east of the Teterboro Airport, accessed off of Route 46 via Liberty Street to Harding Avenue to Alsan Way. Here is a map, courtesy of MapQuest.



We recommend that out-of-town members and guests flying in commercially use the Newark International Airport (EWR), which is about twenty minutes South of our office. There is a wide variety of hotels available at the Newark Airport. A rental car is recommended. From Newark, drive North on the New Jersey Turnpike to US Route 46 Westbound, cross over the Hackensack River, and two long blocks after the traffic circle, turn right onto Liberty Street.

Our members and guests using General Aviation are invited to use the Teterboro Airport (there *are* landing fees and a security fee). Of the half-dozen Fixed Base Operators offering transient parking, we recommend Atlantic Aviation (ask Ground Control for parking in the Atlantic Midfield). They should be able to assist you with ground transportation, and will waive the ramp fee if you purchase fuel. Please coordinate your schedules and needs in advance through our secretary via email to heather_at_setileague_dot_org.

As attendance by one percent of the League's membership constitutes a quorum, all members in good standing are encouraged to attend. The preliminary agenda for this meeting, per Bylaws Article XII, appears below.

Per Article IV, Section 3 our Bylaws, written or electronic notice of this Meeting is being provided to all members in good standing, not less than ten days nor more than ninety days prior to the meeting date. Members are encouraged to submit additional Old Business and New Business items for inclusion in the Agenda. Please email your agenda items to paul_at_setileague_dot_org, not later than April 1, 2020. For planning purposes, we would appreciate it if members would also RSVP to our secretary, heather_at_setileague_dot_org, if planning to attend.

The annual Board of Trustees Meeting required per Bylaws Article V, Section 3 will immediately follow the Membership Meeting. All SETI League members in good standing are welcome to attend.

Preliminary Agenda

- Call to Order
- Minutes of 2019 Membership Meeting
- Financial Report
- Committee Reports
- Old Business
- New Business
- Good and Welfare
- Adjournment



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Annual Renewal: Is This Your Last SearchLites?

SETI League memberships are issued for the *Calendar Year*. Please check the expiration date indicated on your mailing label. If it reads December 2019 or earlier, you have already expired, and *must* renew your SETI League membership **now!** Please fill out and return this page along with your payment.

Please renew my membership in this category:

Full Member	\$50 / yr
Supporting Member (elderly, retired, or disabled)	\$35 / yr
Scholarship Member (full-time students only)	\$25 / yr
Household Member (same address as a Full Member)	\$15 / yr
Household Life Member (same address as a Life Member)	\$300
Life Member (until we make contact)	\$1,000
Sustaining Life Member – a generous <i>annual</i> pledge of:	\$1,000 / yr
Patron (priority use of The SETI League’s radio telescope)	\$10,000
Director (Patron membership plus seat on advisory board)	\$100,000
Benefactor (a major radio telescope named for you)	\$1,000,000

Annual memberships are issued for the calendar year. Those processed in January through April expire on 31 December of that year. Those processed in September through December expire on 31 December of the *following* year. Those members joining in May through August should remit half the annual dues indicated, and will expire on 31 December of the same year.

Order Your Membership Premiums:

	(u/c)*	(o)*
Pocket protectors	\$ 3	\$ 4
Mouse pads	\$ 5	\$ 7
<i>Tune In The Universe! (CD-ROM)</i>	\$25	\$30
<i>Proceedings of SETICon01</i>	\$20	\$27
<i>Proceedings of SETICon02</i>	\$20	\$27
<i>Proceedings of SETICon03 (CD)</i>	\$15	\$18
<i>Proceedings of EuroSETI04 (CD)</i>	\$15	\$18
<i>Proceedings of SETICon04(CD)</i>	\$15	\$18
<i>SARA Conference Proceedings:</i>		
2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 (specify)	\$20	\$27
<i>SETI League Technical Manual (CD)</i>	\$10	\$13
<i>Project Cyclops 2nd Edition</i>	\$20	\$30
<i>The Listeners</i> by James Gunn	\$15	\$21
<i>Sing a Song of SETI</i> (Songbook)	\$10	\$13
<i>Sing More Songs of SETI</i> (Songbook)	\$10	\$13
<i>Sing a Song of SETI</i> (music CD)	\$15	\$18
<i>Sing More Songs of SETI</i> (music CD)	\$15	\$18
<i>Demented!</i> (music CD)	\$15	\$18
T-shirts, specify M, L, or XL	\$15	\$22
SETI Nerd Gift Set (one each Mouse Pad, Pocket Protector, <i>Project Cyclops</i> and <i>Tech Manual</i>) at 20% Savings to <u>Members Only</u> :	\$30	\$45

***Includes postage to (u/c) US/Canada, or (o) other locations**
Payments in US Dollars, check payable through a US bank

Pleased to Accept PayPal

The SETI League invites you to pay your membership dues and additional contributions via credit card, using the PayPal online payment system. Simply log on to www.paypal.com and specify that your payment be directed to paypal@setileague.org.

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