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SPEEDING UP SETI SEARCHES BY HUNDREDS OF TIMES: THE ALLEN TELESCOPE ARRAY

Abstract

The Allen Telescope Array (ATA), now under construction in Hat Creek, California, will when completed, speed up the reconnaissance of target star systems by two orders of magnitude over its predecessor program, Project Phoenix. Straightforward extrapolation of technology suggests that within two decades of the start of operations, the ATA will have examined 105 – 106 star systems. If frequently cited estimates of the number of transmitting galactic civilizations (104) are correct, then the sample of star systems examined during these first two decades of operation could well produce a detection.

The technical characteristics of the ATA will be described, together with a report on its current operational status. In addition, we will present preliminary results from its first SETI program; a 20-square degree survey of the inner galactic plane.