

37th SYMPOSIUM ON THE SEARCH FOR EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE (SETI) – The  
Next Steps (A4.)  
SETI II - Interdisciplinary Aspects of SETI (2.)

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A POST-DETECTION DECIPHERMENT STRATEGY

**Abstract**

It is an indisputable fact that positive identification of an extra-terrestrial source will have a profound effect on the human race. And, because of this, we now have initial strategies in place to cater for such a 'contact' situation. We have methods for calculating the significance and impact of announcing a signal and the risk factors for replying to such a signal; much has also been discussed about how we manage a post-detection announcement situation. However, in the event we detect a signal that both satisfy we have detected an extra-terrestrial technology and that the signal displays intelligent-like structured content, we will be in a much more complex situation. No longer do issues of dissemination merely focus on announcing facts surrounding the existence of a technological 'beacon'; we now find ourselves facing the complexities involved in understanding and glimpsing the intellect of the author, whilst the world holds its collective breath..

This paper looks at the immense difficulties involved in trying to decipher the content of a signal, when the world's fears and expectations would be for immediacy of information. It is a reasonable assumption that having announced a signal is from an ET source that the next question will be "is there a message?" To put this task into context, we still have many scripts from our own antiquity that remain undeciphered, despite many serious attempts, over hundreds of years. So, given this, an algorithmic rationale, based on previous research into signal decipherment techniques, is presented. This phased approach will then provide an initial methodology for us attempting to unlock the content of an extra-terrestrial signal, whilst facilitating the dissemination of timely and accurate information to an expectant world.