

60th International Astronautical Congress 2009

38th SYMPOSIUM ON THE SEARCH FOR EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE (SETI) – The
Next Steps (A4.)
SETI II : SETI and Society (2.)

Author: Prof. H. Paul Shuch
SETI League, Cogan Station, PA, United States, paul@setileague.org

PROJECT ARGUS PROGRESS REPORT: T PLUS 13 YEARS AND HOLDING

Abstract

Following the cancellation in 1993 of the NASA SETI program, the grass-roots SETI League was established to help privatize SETI research. Project Argus, its principle scientific initiative, emerged as a continuation of the all-sky survey component of NASA's two-pronged Microwave Observing Project (MOP). Project Argus contemplated a global network of 5,000 small radio telescopes scattered across the surface of the Earth, providing real-time, continuous coverage of all 4 pi steradians of the celestial sphere. This paper traces the development of Project Argus, from its equipment design phase in 1995, through its launch the following year with just five operational instruments, into its growth phase topping 140 cooperative observation posts, and beyond, to its present state of stagnation, which has resulted in far fewer participants than had initially been expected. We explore possible reasons that Project Argus' growth has fallen short of its initial, optimistic goals; examine the technology used to take us this far and that which will be required to take us farther; and discuss the kinds of meaningful scientific observations which can still be made with the global Project Argus network, a viable tool in ongoing astrophysical and SETI research even at its present level. The paper concludes with a summary of lessons learned, which can be applied to future attempts to privatize curtailed government projects.