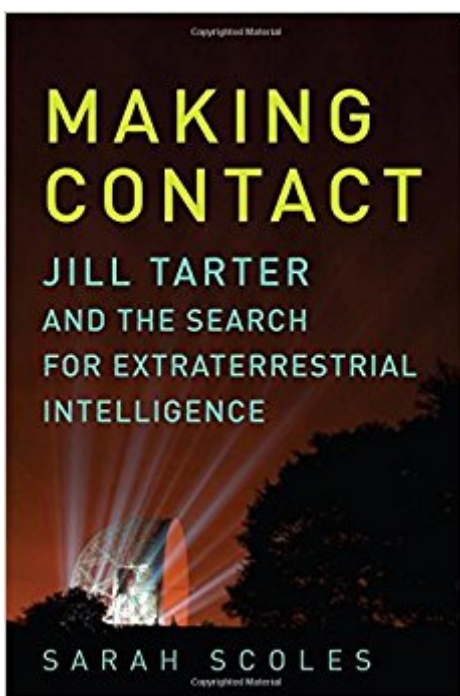


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Making Contact: Jill Tarter And The Search For Extraterrestrial Intelligence



Synopsis

For anyone who has ever looked up at the night sky and wondered, "Are we alone?" *SO ARE WE ALONE?* is a brilliant examination of the science behind the search for extraterrestrial intelligence and its pioneer, Jill Tarter, the inspiration for the main character in Carl Sagan's *Contact*. Jill Tarter is a pioneer, an innovator, an adventurer, and a controversial force. At a time when women weren't encouraged to do much outside the home, Tarter ventured as far out as she could into the three-Kelvin cold of deep space. And she hasn't stopped investigating a subject that takes and takes without giving much back. Today, her computer's screensaver is just the text "SO ARE WE ALONE?" This question keeps her up at night. In some ways, this is the question that keeps us all up at night. We have all spent dark hours wondering about our place in it all, pondering our "aloneness," both terrestrial and cosmic. Tarter's life and her work are not just a quest to understand life in the universe: they are a quest to understand our lives within the universe. No one has told that story, her story, until now. It all began with gazing into the night sky. All those stars were just distant suns—were any of them someone else's sun? Diving into the science, philosophy, and politics of SETI searching for extraterrestrial intelligence Sarah Scoles reveals the fascinating figure at the center of the final frontier of scientific investigation. This is the perfect book for anyone who has ever looked up at the night sky and wondered if we are alone in the universe. 8 pages of color photographs

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Customer Reviews

“Scoles’s conversational style and cultural references will appeal to the readers of Wired magazine. Tarter emerges as both heroic and all too human. To paraphrase the poet Robert Browning, humanity’s reach must exceed its grasp, or what are the heavens for?” - Nature (featured review)

“An admiring, insightful biography. Scoles has done her homework, so readers will both understand and sympathize with Tarter, who has become an icon and role model despite pursuing a goal she knows she will never achieve.” - Kirkus Reviews

“Scoles shares the fantastic story of people willing to pursue a quixotic goal in the face of daunting odds.” - Publishers Weekly

Sarah Scoles is a science writer whose work has appeared in The Atlantic, Slate, Smithsonian, The Washington Post, Scientific American, Popular Science, Discover, New Scientist, Aeon, and Wired. A former editor at Astronomy magazine, Scoles worked at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, the location of the first-ever SETI project. She lives in Denver, Colorado.

This book is a wonderful, provocative read. Just today I read “‘peculiar’ radio signals emerge from nearby star.” Well I’m old enough to remember when “nearby” was much, much nearer than eleven light years away. The article is timely. The subject of the book Jill Tarter, Ph.D. was the former Director of the Search for Extraterrestrial Life institute (SETI). And she was instrumental in establishing the approaches used to assess odd signals like the one identified from the Arecibo Observatory mentioned above. This book describes those approaches and the scientific challenges in dealing with radio-astronomy and the practical challenges in dealing with politicians who fund big, audacious ideas. Sarah Scoles, the author, is a wonderful writer weaving together the personal and work struggles confronting Tarter using wit and a foundational understanding of the science behind the work. Scoles writes clearly about topics that aren’t so clear. Please put Tarter among those scientists who choose to go after really big problems that few others have the guts to pursue. She chose to go after a big, a gargantuan problem, and seek the answer to a universal human question. Are we alone? Oh yeah, Tarter is the inspiration for Jodie Foster’s character in the film “Contact”. Are we alone transcends, race, gender, class, age, and geographic boundary. Everyone has at one point looked up on a clear night and wondered about such events. Tarter has spent a life time working to find out for us all. And any who are trying to inspire girls toward a STEM educational path should gift this book. Hell, gift this book to anyone who

has stared above in wonder. Jill Tarter has walked-the-walk as an accomplished scientist. Though gender is addressed the author does not beat you over the head to remind you Tarter is a female in a male dominated scientific community. The fact that she had to fight her way in is actually understated especially when you consider when she chose to pursue what she loves. She was a female scientist when being a female scientist was not in fashion. For any looking for inspiration, I encourage you to read this book. The audacity of the work, the challenge to secure funding, and the constant effort to gain political support is an on-going, competitive endeavor. And, of course, the challenge of finding suitable planets, odd signals and then differentiating them from anything we created is a big technical challenge given the enormity of space. How Tarter perseveres is inspirational and a wonderful lesson for all. This is a well written, inspirational story about a remarkable fighter and a remarkable goal - to discover if we are alone.

I've sent money to SETI forever. This book tells me why. Are we alone? Probably not but it'd be nice anyway to find out.

Making Contact does a nice job from a very narrow vantage point. That we have never been visited. Why listen for signals unless you have read everything there is to read and investigate if we have already been visited. I don't think this person has done any research on this. And there is nothing in the book to suggest she has. This does not make any sense as there is plenty of books and radar landing trace cases out there. Pretty hard to have an opinion on something she has done zero research on and totally ignores in the book. Makes no sense.

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