

ASTROBIOLOGY, DISCOVERY, AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

The search for life in the universe, once the stuff of science fiction, is now a robust worldwide research program with a well-defined roadmap probing both scientific and societal issues. This volume examines the humanistic aspects of astrobiology, systematically discussing the approaches to, and critical issues and implications of, discovering life beyond Earth. What do the concepts of life and intelligence, culture and civilization, technology and communication mean in a cosmic context? What are the theological and philosophical implications if we find life – and if we do not? Steven J. Dick argues that, given recent scientific findings, the discovery of life in some form beyond Earth is likely and so we need to study the possible impacts of such a discovery and formulate policies to deal with them. The remarkable and often surprising results are presented here in a form accessible to disciplines across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

STEVEN J. DICK is one of the best-known and most qualified writers on topics relating to humanity's thoughts on extraterrestrial life. He held the 2014 Baruch S. Blumberg NASA/Library of Congress Chair in Astrobiology at the John W. Kluge Center of the Library of Congress. In 2013, he testified before Congress on the subject of astrobiology. He served as the Charles A. Lindbergh Chair in Aerospace History at the National Air and Space Museum from 2011 to 2012, and as the NASA Chief Historian and Director of the NASA History Office from 2003 to 2009. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the NASA Exceptional Service Medal and the Navy Meritorious Civilian Service Medal, and is author or editor of twenty books, including *The Biological Universe*. He was awarded the 2006 LeRoy E. Doggett Prize for Historical Astronomy by the American Astronomical Society. In 2009 the International Astronomical Union designated minor planet 6544 stevendick in his honor.

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STEVEN J. DICK

Former NASA Chief Historian

2014 Baruch S. Blumberg NASA/

Library of Congress Chair in Astrobiology



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To those who search for life
and its meaning
in a cosmic context

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
William Blake, *The Tyger*

It is now very close to inconceivable that we could be the only life, and only
technological intelligence, in the universe.
David Grinspoon, *Earth in Human Hands*, 2016

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