

The Arecibo Message: First Attempt at Alien Contact [B1]

La verità è là fuori e un vecchio messaggio radio potrebbe aiutarci a trovarla. Inviato cinquant'anni fa da un osservatorio ormai smantellato, rappresenta il primo tentativo di contattare con gli extraterrestri.

Is there anyone out there? Do aliens really exist? Will they communicate with us one day? These are some of the questions that the Arecibo message could help answer. [Sent into space](#) on 16 November 1974, the message was the first deliberate [attempt](#) to communicate with aliens.

THIS IS WHO WE ARE

The Arecibo message [is so called](#) because it was transmitted from the Arecibo Telescope at the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico. The event took place at a ceremony to celebrate the observatory's remodelling. Installed in the 1960s, the Arecibo Telescope has since been dismantled. The message was sent to Messier 13, a large [cluster](#) of stars relatively close to Earth. It contained some basic information about Earth and the human race that was transmitted via frequency-modulated radio waves. It was sent in binary form: when the ones are translated into graphic characters and the zeros into spaces the message forms a visual image. The message also included representations of the fundamental chemicals of life, the formula for DNA, a diagram of our solar system, and simple images of a human and the Arecibo telescope itself.

A SYMBOLIC EVENT

We have never received a response to the Arecibo message, and we probably never will. Travelling at the speed of light, the message will take about twenty-five thousand years to [reach](#) Messier 13, and it will take another twenty-five thousand for any response to [reach](#) Earth. What's more, to

receive the message, aliens will have to be in exactly the right place at the right time, and have the capacity to decode the message.

OUTLASTING HUMANS

After it reaches Messier 13, the message will not stop but continue on its course through outer space, travelling through distant galaxies for millions of years, likely outlasting humans. Although many people hope the message will result in alien contact one day, this was not, in fact, its main intention. As Donald Campbell, a professor of Astronomy at Cornell University who was a research associate at the Arecibo Observatory at the time of the transmission, explained, “It was strictly a symbolic event, to show that we could do it.”

Glossary

- **Sent into space** = inviare nello spazio
- **attempt** = tentativo
- **is so called** = viene chiamato in questo modo
- **cluster** = ammasso
- **reach** = raggiungere
- **likely** = probabilmente