KEEPING OMNI-COMPREHENSIVE UFO DATABASES: A COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

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UFO/IFO reports databases (DB) have usually been built by selecting only reports which are satisfying given criteria, the main ones being either high quality reports or special issues case histories (eg. humanoids, trace-landing, physical effects, physiological after-effects, photos, radar confirmation, pilots' testimonies, military investigations).

A cost-benefit analysis (CBA) [1] is tried as of building and keeping an omni-comprehensive national database of any and all references to whatever UFO/IFO reports, where omni-comprehensive means any reference is to be filed, irrespective of whether it refers to high or low strangeness events, certain/possible/impossible identification of causes, old or current reports, generic cases vs. special issues, and even high/low quality of available data.

Among possible costs, the following are considered:

1) Workload of keeping trace (and filing) of many seemingly irrelevant items;

2) A lower signal/noise ratio;

3) Risk of GIGO (garbage in, garbage out) in applying statistics to such DB's.

Among possible benefits the following are :

1) Opinion polls seem to consistently show that only a very small percentage (0.6% in Italy [2]) of UFO sightings get to UFO database collections. Though some authors [3] have suggested that reported testimonies are self-filtered according to growing strangeness, the only sure fact is that the available data sample may be unrepresentative of the whole, the more so since mass use of the Internet has brought to an increase by an order of magnitude in the number of reported UFO sightings, in recent years.

2) On a physical sciences perspective, even fragmentary references may point to a relevant item deserving a closer look, if put in correlation with other data (eg. Figuet's cataloguing generic reports of events on the same dates as French landing reports [4]);

3) On a social sciences perspective (eg. UFO waves analysis) quality of individual cases may be less relevant.

Some considerations on which cautions are demanded for handling omni-comprehensive DB's are offered, based upon a three-decades-long concrete example: Italy's national database (presently over 25,000 entries) [5].

References:

[1] N. E. Boardman. *Cost-benefit Analysis: Concepts and Practice* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006.

[2] E. Russo. What Do Italians Believe about UFOs? The CISU-Doxa Opinion Poll. *Italian UFO Reporter*, 6, 1987, 1-3.

[3] J. Vallée. *The Invisible College.* NY: Dutton, 1976, 113.

[4] M. Figuet, J.-L. Ruchon. *Ovni: le premier dossier complet des rencontres rapprochées en France.* Nice: Lefeuvre, 1979.

[5] G. Abraini. 60 anni di avvistamenti in Italia. *Ufo e ufologia – La guida del Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici.* Torino: Upiar, 2011.