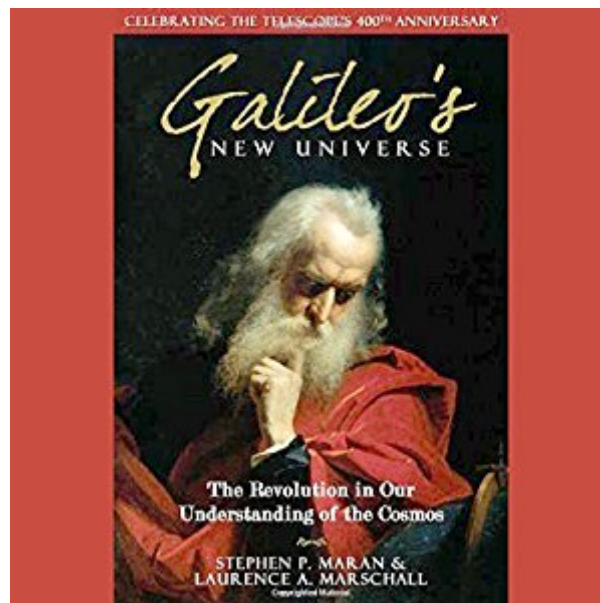




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Galileo's New Universe: The Revolution In Our Understanding Of The Cosmos



Synopsis

The historical and social implications of the telescope and that instrument's modern-day significance are brought into startling focus in this fascinating account. When Galileo looked to the sky with his perspicillum, or spyglass, roughly 400 years ago, he could not have fathomed the amount of change his astonishing findings—a seemingly flat moon magically transformed into a dynamic, crater-filled orb and a large, black sky suddenly held millions of galaxies—would have on civilizations. Reflecting on how Galileo's world compares with contemporary society, this insightful analysis deftly moves from the cutting-edge technology available in 17th-century Europe to the unbelievable phenomena discovered during the last 50 years, documenting important astronomical advances and the effects they have had over the years.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was expecting a book about Galileo and his concept of the universe, and while this is covered it is not the main focus of the book. Its subtitle Celebrating the Telescopes 400th Anniversary, is a more accurate reflection of the contents of the book. The book starts with a very brief biography of Galileo, but it contains less information than that contained in the Wikipedia article on Galileo. This is then followed by a chapter on Galileo's improvement of the telescope and a discussion of modern telescopes. The remaining 8 chapters utilize the same format - there is a brief description of what Galileo saw (with chapters on the moon, the sun, Jupiter, Saturn, Venus, Comets, the stars and Milky Way and finally his cosmology in general), followed by a discussion of the modern view of each of these observations. Thus, only about half of the 168 pages of the text are actually about

Galileo. The book only mentions his book on Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems and the problems that this caused him, but this information is superficial at best and is covered in far more detail in the aforementioned Wikipedia article. There is almost no discussion of any of Galileo's very important contributions to physics in general. My chief problems with this book are two fold. First, it was nowhere as comprehensive as I had hoped it to be and secondly it contains no illustrations of any kind and this is the type of book that cries out for illustrations that would greatly clarify the text. In short - this is a fine book if you are primarily interested in Galileo's telescope and the observation that he made with it. However, it is not very good if you want to know more about Galileo. Five-stars for the telescope, but overall only 4-stars.

On the 400th anniversary of the telescope, the authors weave a history of Galileo and his revolutionary tool with up-to-date science of the cosmos. The blend makes for a fascinating read. Just enough technical to put you in awe, but sensible enough that all - science types and art types - will thoroughly enjoy the acquisition of heavenly knowledge.

There have been a great many books about Galileo in recent years, starting with Dava Sobel's Galileo's Daughter. What makes this book different is that it ties Galileo's earliest discoveries to what modern science knows about the Universe today. Co-authors Stephen Maran and Lawrence Marschall are well equipped to tell this story, with Maran having spent 35 year with NASA and Marschall having taught astronomy, physics, and science writing for many years as well. The book is organized around a series of topics dealing with the instruments and the objects of astronomy. Chapter one gives us a brief summary of Galileo's life, and the age in which he lived. Chapter two deals with telescope, and succeeding chapters start with Earth's Moon, and from there, take us to the Sun, the planets, and beyond. Each chapter tells two stories: First, what was known about the topic in the ages of Galileo, and what Galileo added to that knowledge, and second, what science has discovered since then. This narrative style does an excellent job of illustrating Galileo's place in the historical narrative of astronomy, and helps the reader to better understand how pivotal Galileo's role was in explaining the Universe around us. If this book has one fault, it's the lack of illustrations. It's very difficult to explain how a telescope works, or the arrangement of the planets, with text alone - particularly for the reader unfamiliar with astronomy. I think this book would be greatly improved with the addition of simple line drawings and star charts, and I would encourage the publishers to consider doing this in future editions.

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