



Books and Multimedia Reviews

Meteorites: Their Impact on Science and History edited by Brigitte Zanda and Monica Rotaru. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2001, 128 pp., \$18.95 (ISBN 0-521-79940-6).

This is a very nice popular science book on planetary science that bravely encompasses many of the more complex aspects of planetary science, including short-lived radionuclides, exposure ages and nucleosynthesis, all in a remarkably well-presented manner. First published in French as *Les Météorites!*, it has now been translated into English by Roger Hewins. The translation is unusually good and, apart from the occasional odd phrasing, it is very readable.

The book is well illustrated with many magnificent pictures and diagrams. The illustrations in particular complement the text very well and make complex issues such as presolar grains, short-lived radionuclides, age dating and nucleosynthesis, understandable without compromising particularly on accuracy. This is a difficult thing to do in a popular science text aimed at a very wide readership. If you have a partner who wants to know why you spend so much of your free time, unpaid, in the laboratory, working on meteorites, then this book is a must. Even planetary scientists will find the descriptions interesting and useful. As a source for quick facts, which never seem to be at hand when you need them, and ways to explain planetary science in a concise, but accurate manner, this book is invaluable. I have, for example, already found the book useful in describing certain elements of planetary science.

Do not, however, be misled. This is not a bible of meteoritics with handy facts on everything. It is exactly what it is supposed to be, a popular description of our science requiring a relatively small level of background knowledge with appropriate examples and facts thrown in. It reminds me very much of a copy of an illustrated book of geology I had as a young boy which stimulated my fascination with the subject and left me wanting more. If you're looking for a present for a nephew, niece, or uncle and aunt for that matter, this is the book to buy.

The line up of authors that have contributed to this work is impressive. Roger Hewins has contributed a fine chapter on the solar nebula. Ernst Zinner explains presolar grains in the most easily to understand way yet and Brigitte Zanda and colleagues provide an excellent description of meteorites in general. My advice is to just flip the pages and you'll probably end up buying a copy.

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The Universe Unveiled: Instruments and Images through History edited by Bruce Stephenson, Marvin Bolt and Anna Felicity Friedman. The Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum, Chicago, Illinois, USA and Cambridge University Press, New York, New York, USA, 2000, 152 pp., \$29.95 hardback (ISBN 0-521-79143-X).

When I first saw the title of this book, I had the impression it would be a comprehensive volume about the history of astronomical instruments and discoveries resulting from them. It is not. Although not as catchy, perhaps a more accurate title would have been, "The Adler Planetarium Unveiled: Instruments and Images in Our Collection". This is a lovely book filled with crisp images of beautiful instruments, diagrams, and maps. It is simply more limited in scope than its title implies.

The book contains an illustrated introduction, four chapters, a short glossary, an appendix, a suggested reading list, and a reference list for the illustrations. The four chapters are subdivided into numerous two-page sections, each with its own subheading. There are no captions *per se* for the illustrations in the book. Rather, the text in each section eloquently describes the figures that appear on those two pages. Illustrations are given about twice as much space as text. Topics are not covered in excruciating detail, but they do provide a basic understanding of the instruments. Readers interested in the intricacies of using the antiquated devices in this book will need to find additional sources. The list of suggested reading will be quite useful in that respect. The appendix contains original, simple drawings of celestial mechanics and of exploded and cut-away views of instruments.

While the emphasis is clearly on devices and images from western culture, there is some discussion of products from eastern and Islamic cultures. The book concentrates on instruments and images from the middle 1400s through the