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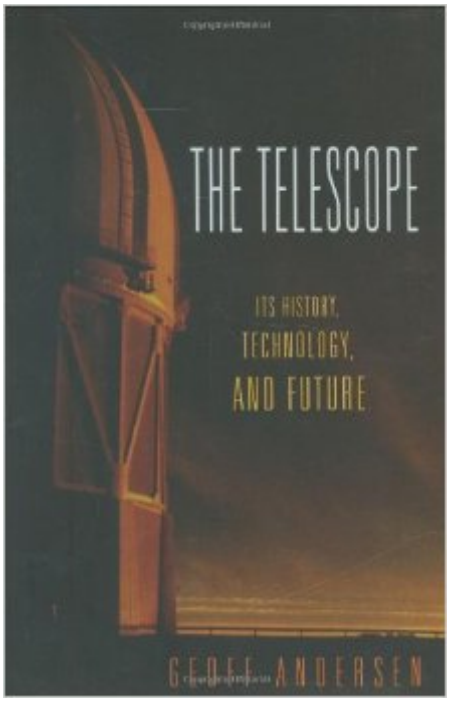
The Telescope: Its History, Technology, And Future



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Synopsis

In the four centuries since its invention, the telescope has transformed how humans view the universe and their place in it. But what do most of us know about telescopes themselves--their history, how they work, what they are being used for today, or what the next generation of billion-dollar telescopes will look like? In The Telescope, Geoff Andersen fills in all the details for us in an accessible, nontechnical way that will appeal to the amateur astronomer and anyone else who has been more than a little curious about this amazing instrument.The book covers every aspect of optical telescopes--from the humblest backyard setup, to state-of-the-art observatories, to the Hubble Space Telescope and spy satellites. Chapters describe the development, design, and operation of telescopes; how observatories are sited, engineered, and built; variations such as solar and liquid-mirror telescopes; and some of the key astronomical discoveries telescopes have made possible. And there are plenty of surprises along the way. We learn, for example, that most of today's professional astronomers never even look through their own telescopes, relying instead on digital imaging, measurement, and analysis--or even remote computer control of a night-shrouded observatory on the other side of the Earth.But, as The Telescope explains, these magnificent instruments do more than simply peer into space. They project and receive laser beams--for communicating, mapping, and making detailed observations of the Earth. They also look down at us from spy satellites, providing secret images to intelligence agencies--and, increasingly, giving a curious public access to more pedestrian images.The Telescope is the ideal introduction to a fascinating instrument that has taught us so much--but that most of us know so little about.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an odd book. It was written by an Aussie who now works at the US Air Force Academy. It was originally published in Australia and New Zealand, then republished by Princeton University Press. And I can’t figure out who the target reader is.It is a short book, a bit over 200 pages, broken up into short chapters with magazine article level treatments of various subjects. Despite its brevity, there are many times the author claims he could write so much more if he only had the space. He often alludes to being much more knowledgeable than the reader, yet some of the chapters don’t quite get it right, and others give the impression he is simply digesting what he has read in other popular treatments.He spends a few pages on astronomy before telescopes, then a few pages on the early history of the telescope. Both subjects are covered in more detail in many texts and popular astronomy books. These are followed by a brief sketch of how different types of telescopes work from a geometrical optics standpoint, and then a chapter called "The perfect telescope", which is really a very short, very introductory discussion of diffraction. A chapter with the cute but misleading title "When good telescopes go bad" then discusses why real telescopes can’t be built to perform as well as reading a few page article on telescopes would suggest. (Aberrations and all that.)Andersen then moves into the sensors that record what the telescope is looking at. One chapter skims over cameras, spectrometers, photometers, and polarimeters. He then has a chapter on interferometry.

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