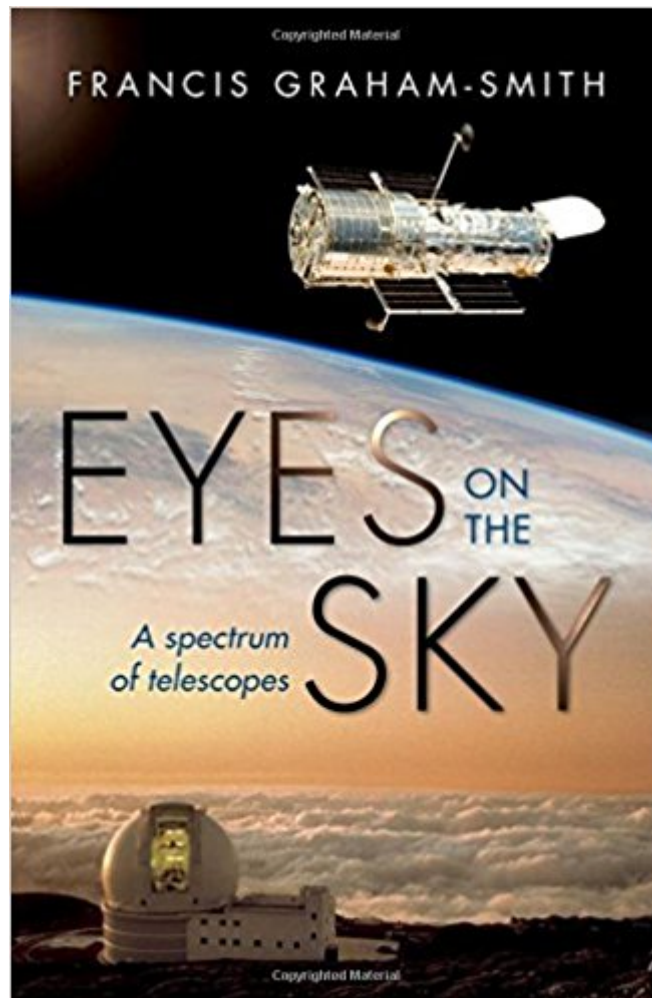




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Eyes On The Sky: A Spectrum Of Telescopes



Synopsis

Four centuries ago, Galileo first turned a telescope to look up at the night sky. His discoveries opened the cosmos, revealing the geometry and dynamics of the solar system. Today's telescopic equipment, stretching over the whole spectrum from visible light to radio and millimetre astronomy, through infrared to ultraviolet, X-rays and gamma rays, has again transformed our understanding of the whole Universe. In this book Francis Graham-Smith explains how this technology can be engaged to give us a more in-depth picture of the nature of the universe. Looking at both ground-based telescopes and telescopes on spacecraft, he analyses their major discoveries, from planets and pulsars to cosmology. Large research teams and massive data handling are necessary, but the excitement of discovery is increasingly shared by a growing public, who can even join in some of the analysis by remote computer techniques. Observational astronomy has become international. All major projects are now partnerships; most notably the Square Kilometre Array, which will involve astronomers from over 100 countries and will physically exist in several of them. Covering the history and development of telescopes from Galileo to the present day, *Eyes on the Sky* traces what happens when humankind looks up.

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Customer Reviews

In this short book the author sets out to cover telescopes and astronomy at all wavelengths of electromagnetic radiation. The result is somewhat spotty, and mostly shallow. I have a background in optics, and the author is a radio astronomer, which does influence my view of his book. My sense

is that he becomes both more enthusiastic and holds a steadier pen when he reaches radio astronomy after discussing astronomy at shorter wavelengths. Optical astronomy has a much longer history than astronomy at other wavelengths. This book quickly moves through several centuries of developments and then focuses on the modern telescopes of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This is fair in that it better matches the coverage of other wavelengths, and the period where our modern understanding of the universe began to unfold. For me, however, it slights a story of interest to me. The brevity and sense of spottiness of the book is exacerbated by the author covering both the development of telescopes and the discoveries they bring. Both are interesting stories, but the pace of the book leaves the reader feeling unsatisfied by the coverage of either. It is also difficult to discern what audience the author wrote the book for. Some of the discussion is at a lay level, but he sometimes throws in technical terms probably not known to most people. He also sometimes stops to explain concepts he refers to, but sometimes doesn't. A particular item that caught my eye was that his definition of "near infrared" is not only much more expansive than I am used to using, it goes beyond any definition I am aware of. But I have experience in infrared sensing, and it's not a point most readers will care about.

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