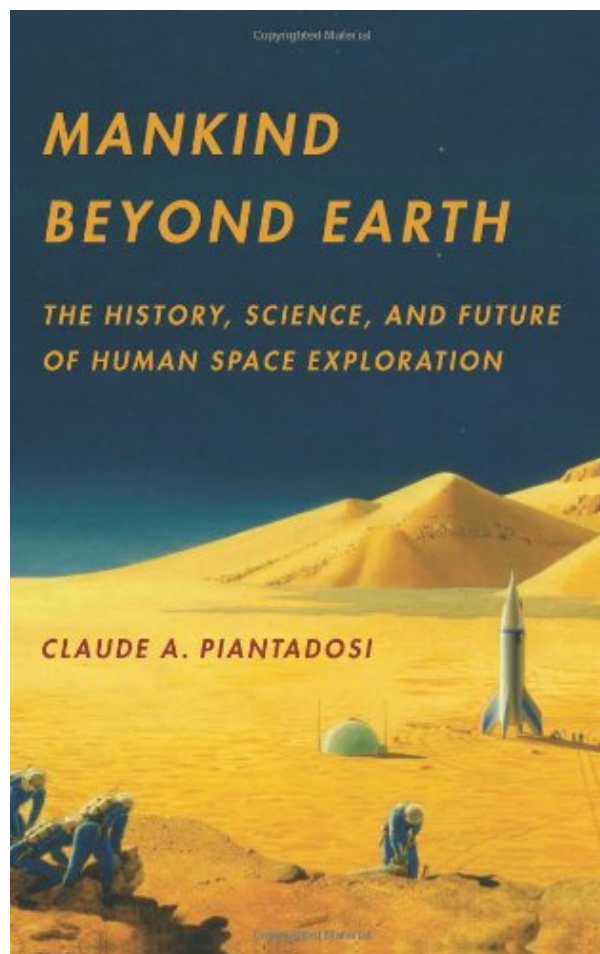


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Review

An important book by a visionary with his feet planted on the ground.

(Kirkus Reviews)

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(Michael L. Gernhardt, NASA astronaut, manager of the Environmental Physiology Laboratory at the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center)

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(Choice)

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Seeking to reenergize Americans' passion for the space program, the value of further exploration of the Moon, and the importance of human beings on the final frontier, Claude A. Piantadosi presents a rich history of American space exploration and its major achievements. He emphasizes the importance of reclaiming national command of our manned program and continuing our unmanned space missions, and he stresses the many adventures that still await us in the unfolding universe. Acknowledging space exploration's practical and financial obstacles, Piantadosi challenges us to revitalize American leadership in space exploration in order to reap its scientific bounty.

Piantadosi explains why space exploration, a captivating story of ambition, invention, and discovery, is also increasingly difficult and why space experts always seem to disagree. He argues that the future of the space program requires merging the practicalities of exploration with the constraints of human biology. Space science deals with the unknown, and the margin (and budget) for error is small. Lethal near-vacuum conditions, deadly cosmic radiation, microgravity, vast distances, and highly scattered resources remain immense physical problems. To forge ahead, America needs to develop affordable space transportation and flexible exploration strategies based in sound science. Piantadosi closes with suggestions for accomplishing these goals, combining his healthy skepticism as a scientist with an unshakable belief in space's untapped and wholly worthwhile potential.

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars

By Jennifer Cosgrove

Got it for class and never read it. Looked interesting though.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A brilliant and fascinating science lesson, loosely organized around space exploration

By Aaron C. Brown

I loved this book, but you may not. The author is a scientist of broad interest who tells you much more than you need to know to weigh alternative ideas for exploring outer space. For example, there are four ways to die from lack of oxygen and the book gives concise but thorough descriptions of the physiology of each one. Someday an astronaut may have a heart attack (ischemia) in space, or die from cytotoxic or stagnant hypoxia due to disease or genetic defect. But you'd think a book on space travel would concentrate on not having oxygen because space is a vacuum and other planets don't have oxygen atmospheres and maybe your spaceship or spacesuit sprang a leak or your oxygen recycling system broke down (hypoxic hypoxia, if you're keeping track). The book has a similarly comprehensive account of how radiation affects tissues instead of describing only the most significant short-term dangers of cosmic rays outside the Van Allen belt.

It's not just physiology that gets this treatment, the author will launch into general discussions of physics, chemistry, geology, scientific history or anything else that interests him with the least excuse. Ever wondered about how we got those International Geophysical and International Polar years? Or what the "Antarctic stare" is? Then this is the book for you. But if you're looking for a focused discussion of the technology of space travel, you might get frustrated. Think of a late-night rambling discussion with a very smart guy who has thought a lot about exploration of outer space, who has a strong pedantic streak that is tolerable because he actually knows what he's talking about and it's interesting stuff.

Another feature of this book that will not be universally popular but that I liked, is the author has strong opinions and little patience for alternative views. Exploration means sending humans, and the only path worth considering is developing self-sustaining resources and capabilities like permanent low-Earth orbit facilities, a moon base, methodologies for extended living without resupply and mining, processing, reprocessing and disposal technologies to manage physical resources off-Earth. Space should be explored

because that's what humans do, and maybe a little for what we will learn, but it will not be valuable as a permanent place to live. You will learn why the author holds these opinions, but not much about why others may disagree (attractive ideas the author doesn't wish to discuss are labeled "mind candy" and left at that).

The writing style is clear and vigorous, with a distinctive voice. My only gripe is the author is overfond of silly acronyms and tables that could use better design and any point at all. This is a book that will teach you a lot about a lot of things, and will be a pleasure to read for those who like to learn without worrying about whether there is any use to the learning.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

An excellent mix of topics

By LewisC

I am a huge reader of science texts. I've read all the popular books and I like to delve into the less well known. I've honestly never heard of Professor Piantadosi nor have I read his work before.

The author looks at the history of space exploration and the barriers facing us in the future. As he says, space travel is not just about technology, it also about biology. He makes the point more than once that it is also about finances and politics. He starts off showing the passion of the people who made it to the moon and explains the difficulties they faced.

As we go through the book, he explains the importance of sustenance, waste removal, air for breathing, propulsion, distances, the effects of radiation on physiology and technology and so much more. Who will be the people exploring, what will they explore and how will they do it.

Some people may not like his style of writing. Like many scientific texts, it's written in a mostly informal essay style. While everything he says is related, he tends to jump around a bit. In the space of just a few pages, he explains the measurements we'll use in space (not just KM and light-year but AU and parsec), biomedicine, stress and the effects of radiation. Stuck in there is a great discussion of the people who live above 12,000 feet and how they have adapted to that life.

I say some people may not like it, but I found the entire thing to be fascinating. I've never seen some of the concepts explained as well as the author does it. There are a lot of topics I have never seen addressed for the layman.

This book is sort of like National Geographic for the Space Explorer. Maybe even a little popular mechanics thrown in for good measure. I really enjoyed it and recommend it to anyone who likes general space science. Give it a few chapters to decide whether or not to finish. If you can make it to chapter 3, you'll have a good feel for his writing. I found it to be a bit quirky but, in the end, a great way to approach so many topics. Space travel really is complicated, more so than many people believe.

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