



Theaters of Time and Space

American Planetaria, 1930-1970

by Jordan Marche

DESCRIPTION

Every year, millions of Americans visit planetariums and are captivated by their strikingly realistic portrayal of the night sky. Today, it is indeed difficult to imagine astronomy education without these magnificent celestial theaters. But projection planetariums, first developed in Germany, have been a part of American museum pedagogy only since the early twentieth century and were not widespread until the 1960s.

In this unique social history, former planetarium director and historian of science Jordan D. Marché II offers the first complete account of the community of individuals and institutions that, during the period between 1930 and 1970, made planetariums the popular teaching aids they are today. Marché addresses issues such as the role of gender and social developments within the planetarium community, institutional patronage, and the popularization of science. He reveals how, at different times, various groups, including financial donors, amateur scientists, and government officials, viewed the planetarium as an instrument through which they could shape public understanding and perceptions of astronomy and space science.

Offering an insightful, wide-ranging look into the origins of an institution that has fascinated millions, *Theaters of Time and Space* brings new perspectives to how one educational community changed the cultural complexion of science, helped shape public attitudes toward the U.S. space program, and even contributed to policy decisions regarding allocations for future space research.

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