

# Book Review: Astronomy — A Self-teaching Guide

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## Keywords

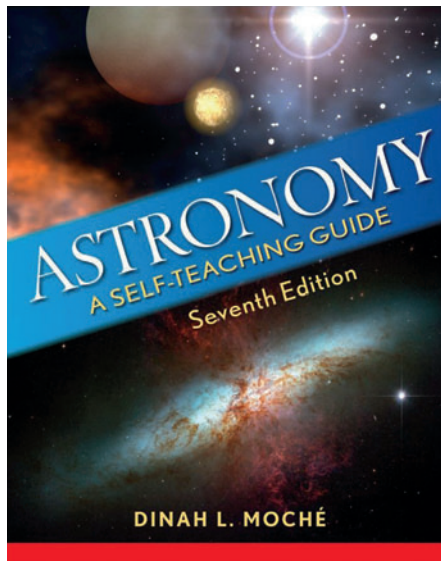
Book, Self-teaching

## Summary

*Astronomy — A Self-teaching Guide* (Wiley, 7th Edition, ISBN: 978-0-470-23083-1, 388 pages), by Dinah L. Moché, is more than a self-teaching guide for beginners. It is also a good reference for science communicators who might occasionally need to refresh their knowledge of astronomy.

Divided into twelve chapters, this book covers general information about the main fields of astronomy, from the Big Bang to the recent scientific findings in hot topics such as exoplanets and extraterrestrial life. For those interested in testing their skills, there are lots of exercises and self-tests in each of the chapters, all with answers provided at the end of the book. About one third of the book is dedicated to the Solar System; certainly one of the subjects that best attracts the attention of the general public. The information is kept short and clear, and is easy to understand even for those without a strong math background. When talking about numbers, the author is careful in presenting physical magnitudes in both the metric and imperial systems. However, the attempt to reach international readers stops at the Equator: the explanations of the Earth's seasons and the star maps only work well in the northern hemisphere, which might confuse readers from the south.

There are a few common small mistakes here and there, such as the omission of Ophiuchus from the zodiac, the use of the word "meteorite" instead of "meteoroid" in some places and a mention of Alpha Centauri as the closest star visible with naked eye (although in the Appendix the Sun is correctly indicated).



**Figure 1.** *Astronomy — A Self-teaching Guide*  
Dinah L. Moché  
John Wiley & Sons; 7th edition  
368 pages  
ISBN: 978-0471383536

The low number of colour images is compensated for by the many concise diagrams that do a good job in explaining the most important facts and by a large number of links to websites with images and more information. A few of the links are wrong, regrettably including one to this very journal, in the appendix.

However, taking into consideration the astronomical — in both senses — amount of information that this book presents, comprising more than 13 billion years of facts, the issues are relatively minor and do not diminish the value of the work. The book has a really great cost–benefit ratio and is certainly a handy tool whenever a science communicator needs an overview of some popular topic in astronomy.

## Biography

Raquel Yumi Shida works as a web content coordinator for the education and Public Outreach Department at the European Southern Observatory, the International Astronomical Union and the European Space Agency/Hubble Information Centre in Garching, Germany. She holds a professional degree in architecture from the University of São Paulo (Brazil) and has previously worked doing both astronomical research and outreach in various locations in South and North America.