50 years of solar system exploration

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Flyby missions are designed to obtain the most basic information on their target bodies. Early flyby missions also enabled space agencies to learn to fly between planets. This early trek into the solar system was accomplished with flybys to each planet in our local neighborhood.

Beyond flybys, the next most sophisticated type of mission aimed to get a spacecraft into orbit around a solar system object. Data from flyby missions were essential to prioritizing which objects to orbit. High-resolution data from an orbiter mission are essential to planning for a future lander or rover mission.

Lander and rover missions enable scientists to acquire "ground truth," measurements so necessary to fully interpret data from orbital missions. The successful landings of the 1-metric-ton2 Curiosity rover on Mars and the Rosetta mission"s Philae probe on comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko clearly show the ability of our space agencies to explore our solar system at a new level of intensity. Steps like these will allow humans to go beyond this planet and out into the solar system once again.

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NASA"s first successful mission to another planet, Mariner 2 to Venus in 1962, marked the beginning of what NASA Chief Scientist Jim Green describes in this volume as "a spectacular era" of solar system exploration its first 50 years of planetary exploration, NASA sent spacecraft to fly by, orbit, land on, or rove on every planet in our solar system, as well as Earth"s Moon and several moons of other planets. Pluto, reclassified as a dwarf planet in 2006, was visited by the New Horizons spacecraft in 2015.

What began as an endeavor of two nations--the United States and the former Soviet Union--has become a multinational enterprise, with a growing number of space agencies worldwide building and launching planetary exploration missions--sometimes alone, sometimes together.

In this volume, a diverse array of scholars addresses the science, technology, policy, and politics of planetary exploration. This volume offers a collection of in-depth studies of important projects, decisions, and milestones of this era.

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analyzed reviews to verify trustworthiness.

Divided into 12 chapters, this free volume is expertly edited by Linda Billings, a consultant to NASA"s Astrobiology Program and Planetary Defense Coordination Office in the Planetary Science Division of the Science Mission Directorate at NASA Headquarters in Washington, DC.

"What readers will find in this volume is a collection of interesting stories about money, politics, human resources, commitment, competition and cooperation, and the "faster, better, cheaper" era of solar system exploration," explains Billings.

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