



The Planiverse: Computer Contact with a Two-Dimensional World

By A.K. Dewdney

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The year is 1981, and in the computer lab of a large university a group of graduate students and their professor are hard at work on their mainframe, graphically modeling an imaginary two-dimensional world. The project is going well, extraordinarily well, when one student suddenly notices that the world they are building with their graphics program is . . . inhabited! So begins A.K. Dewdney's newly republished 1984 tale of trans-dimensional discovery and communication. The students and their professor find, to their astonishment, that they are communicating with Yendred, their only contact in the 2D world of Arde. At first disbelieving, they are soon entranced by a universe in which astonishing tiny creatures—indeed an entire astonishing world—exist solely on an x-y plane. This book, following in the footsteps Edward Abbot's nineteenth century classic Flatland, is a cult favorite among mathematicians and computer scientists. As a kind of mental puzzle or brain-teaser, it challenges and delights, inviting readers to imagine just how a two-dimensional world might work. But the book is also a parable, serving as a cautionary tale about the difficulties of communication from one totally alien world to another, and suggesting that it is not only two-dimensional Ardeans who fail to see beyond the obvious world before their eyes.

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Review

The Planiverse ... stretches our imagination by introducing a new and different kind of world. In the process, it changes the way we look at our own. -- Discover Magazine

A worthy successor to Flatland. -- Thomas Banchoff, Nature

It's not everyone who gets to design a universe from scratch. But A.K. Dewdney has done just that. -- The Boston Globe

Once you have been captivated by the two-dimensional Ardean world, the problems facing its difficult technology haunt you, begging for more solutions. Arde easily becomes a puzzle without end. -- Erik Sandberg-Diment, The New York Times

About the Author

A.K. Dewdney is a mathematician, computer scientist, astronomer, engineer, and biologist. A member of the computer science department at the University of Western Ontario for 27 years, he retired in 1997, only to be appointed professor of Zoology at the same university in 1998 in recognition of his important biological work. Dewdney is the author of 11 books. He has been increasingly involved in environmental issues, mainly the habitat loss created by the expansion of human populations. Currently, most of the author's spare time is taken up by his work in a natural area close to his home, a 100-acre complex of forest and ponds. He and his wife are managing an ambitious bio-inventory of the area and have logged over 1,000 species.

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