

Book review in February 2005 issue of

THE OBSERVATORY A REVIEW OF ASTRONOMY

University of London Observatory

Women of Space: Cool Careers on the Final Frontier, by L. S.

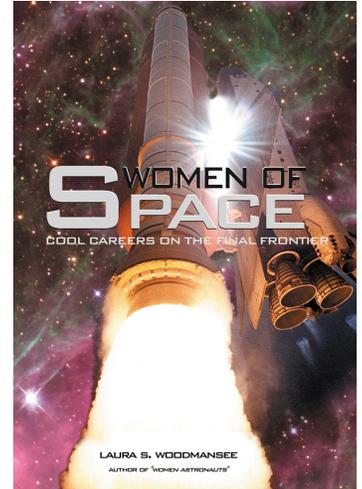
Woodmansee (Apogee Books, through Gazelle, Lancaster), 2003. Pp. 198 + CD-ROM 25.5 x 17.5 cm. Price £17.95/\$22.95 (paperback; ISBN 1 894 95903 5).

On 1963 June 16, the *Vostock 5* mission launched Colonel-Engineer Valentina Vladimirovna Tereshkova into space and women around the world were inspired by the momentous flight. However, forty years on, where are all the women working in the space industry and other space-related careers? Unfortunately we have an image problem: science appears to be a bit 'geeky' for girls. In addition, it is very difficult to counteract this as there aren't a great number of women in these jobs visible to young women as examples of normal people doing really interesting work. *Women Of Space* addresses this issue head on by providing over a hundred mini-biographies of women engineers, pilots, astronomers, planetary scientists, medics, educators and, of course, astronauts.

This is a book largely aimed at school-age women and encourages them to consider all the career possibilities available to them if they have an interest in space. Having said that, reading it was exciting, even to someone who has already made a firm decision about her career! It reminded me of all the things I like about my job — the things that I usually forget about in the midst of data reduction. The book has a very proactive feel to it: each of the women featured offers practical career advice; and the variety of jobs (and career paths to those positions) demonstrates that the clever way to get what you want is to look for opportunities at every stage. Each of the different careers showcased require vastly different skills, which helps denounce the 'geeky' maths image, but also sends the overall message that you can bend your interests and your skills in order to find something you enjoy.

Woodmansee provides space resources and practical advice on how young girls can maintain their interest whilst still at school. This includes the complementary CD-ROM which contains interviews with several of the women featured in the book. Whilst some of the information is certainly stateside orientated, most is generally applicable and there are useful resources listed for UK readers as well as those in the United States.

I found this a thoroughly refreshing and enjoyable book. It is an excellent reference for a school's careers library, anyone who works in public outreach, and all young women with an interest in space. I will certainly be dipping into it the next time I'm in need of inspiration. — MAIRI BROOKES.



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