



Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society

By Bruno Latour

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Science and technology have immense authority and influence in our society, yet their working remains little understood. The conventional perception of science in Western societies has been modified in recent years by the work of philosophers, sociologists and historians of science. In this book Bruno Latour brings together these different approaches to provide a lively and challenging analysis of science, demonstrating how social context and technical content are both essential to a proper understanding of scientific activity. Emphasizing that science can only be understood through its practice, the author examines science and technology in action: the role of scientific literature, the activities of laboratories, the institutional context of science in the modern world, and the means by which inventions and discoveries become accepted. From the study of scientific practice he develops an analysis of science as the building of networks. Throughout, Bruno Latour shows how a lively and realistic picture of science in action alters our conception of not only the natural sciences but also the social sciences and the sociology of knowledge in general.

This stimulating book, drawing on a wealth of examples from a wide range of scientific activities, will interest all philosophers, sociologists and historians of science, scientists and engineers, and students of the philosophy of social science and the sociology of knowledge.

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- Sales Rank: #117040 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Harvard University Press
- Published on: 1988-10-15
- Released on: 1988-11-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .63" h x 5.96" w x 8.92" l, .85 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

One cannot but be impressed by the scope of Latour's work...This is no mere *bricolage*, but a coherent and powerful framework for research. I predict that *Science in Action* will have an impact comparable to Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* both as a provocation to philosophers and as an inspiration to sociologists and historians of science. (Nicholas Jardine *Times Literary Supplement*)

Latour's *Science in Action* is a "must read" for all sociologists, not just because the sociology of science is a dynamic and growing subdiscipline, but more importantly because Latour's thesis challenges the notions that underlie sociologists' efforts to distinguish our field as a "science"...Latour's thesis is that science, including sociology, is collective action and that facticity is a consequence, not a cause, of collective action...An excellent and enjoyable introduction to the sociology of science. (Joan H. Fujimura *Contemporary Sociology*)

There is a wealth of material and some titillating insight into discoveries beginning with the framed race to find the structure of DNA--the double helix--and in Latour's hands, it becomes a true cliffhanger...This [book] will reward those who want to probe science and the modern world in depth. (*Kirkus Reviews*)

This account of science as composed of drifting, recombining networks is presented with considerable charm and humour. There are many brief case histories to enliven the text, and the book works very well as a guide through scientific reasoning. (Steven Yearly *Nature*)

About the Author

Bruno Latour is Professor at Sciences Po, Paris, and the 2013 winner of the Ludvig Holberg International Memorial Prize.

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