



Exploring Mars: Chronicles from a decade of discovery

by Scott Hubbard

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Commanding between 0.5 and 1% of today's US federal budget compared with 4% in the heady days of the 1950s and '60s, NASA is an agency heavily driven by political concerns. Scott Hubbard reminds us of the 'battles for

budgets, competition for ever more limited research dollars, decisions made to preserve jobs rather than to advance science and exploration...', and so on. In a behind-the-scenes manner he describes how the NASA Mars programme since 1997 has been geared up to 'follow the water', rather than to run probably ambiguous life-detection experiments. (Cynically one might add that the longer the possibly negative results of the latter are successfully avoided, the longer that programme might be.) This successful ongoing programme has been achieved in the face of the requirement to be 'faster, better, cheaper', but one regrets that the quantum leap of a manned mission recedes ever further into the future.

Scott Hubbard has led NASA's Mars programme from 2000 onwards. The Foreword to this book describes his job as being 'to harness the resources of a modern space agency to conceive, design, build and launch spacecraft to look for signs of water and life.' He is therefore very well placed to tell this story of the first decade and a half since the exploration of Mars resumed with the spectacular *Pathfinder* mission of 1997. The book can be recommended as a clearly written account from the perspective of one of its chief participants.

Richard McKim

The reviewer has observed Mars intensively since 1973, and has produced comprehensive Mars reports for the BAA at every apparition since that of 1979-'80.



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