

## Books

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**Smithsonian Timelines of the Ancient World: A Visual Chronology from the Origins of Life to AD 1500** — Chris Scarre. Lavishly illustrated with hundreds of color reproductions of artifacts and maps, this oversized grouping of timelines reveals facts about food and the environment, shelter and architecture, technology and innovation, and art and ritual from around the world. In-depth features on specific topics such as hominids, the pyramids at Giza, and the rise of Islam are included to help tie together and enhance the information provided in the timelines. Dorling Kindersley, 1993, 256 p., color photos and illus., hardcover, \$45.00.

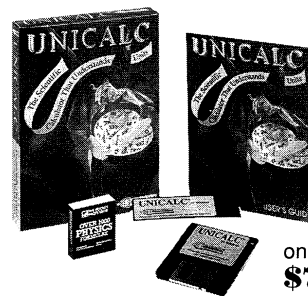
**Trilobites** — Riccardo Levi-Setti. Because of their mineralized exoskeletons, trilobites fossilized readily during their time, between 600 million and 230 million years ago, and are now one of the most prolific ancient fossils in existence. In this updated, second-edition survey of these "butterflies of the sea," extraordinary black-and-white photographs of trilobites from around the world and through the ages are accompanied by text describing the evolutionary and geologic insights gleaned from these arthropods. U of Chicago Pr, 1993, 342 p., b&w photos & illus., hardcover, \$45.00.

**The Wellness Book: The Comprehensive Guide to Maintaining Health and Treating Stress-Related Illness** — Herbert Benson and Eileen M. Stuart. This compendium of knowledge, gleaned from research done at the Mind/Body Medical Institute of New England Deaconess Hospital and Harvard Medical School, addresses illness and disease caused or aggravated by stress, such as heart problems, insomnia, chronic pain, weight loss, cancer, AIDS, and infertility. Outlined here are well-founded interactive guidelines for alleviating stress and improving lifestyle through nutrition, exercise, body awareness, cognitive restructuring, and more. Originally published in hardcover in 1992. Fireside, 493 p., b&w illus., paperback, \$14.00.

**Wright's Complete Disaster Survival Manual: How to Prepare for Earthquakes, Floods, Tornadoes, and Other Natural Disasters** — Ted Wright. A practical guide for weathering a natural disaster, written by a man who lectures professionally about survival techniques. The primary focus here is earthquakes, although many of the recommendations pertain to floods and tornadoes. Wright emphasizes the need to assess the structures and situations in which you frequently find yourself and to plan in advance how best to cope with a disaster in them. Hampton Roads, 1993, 285 p., b&w illus., paperback, \$14.95.

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### Casting more light on breast cancer?

I enjoyed the article on the pervasive presence of xenoestrogens, and the estrogenic effects of nocturnal lighting and magnetic fields, and their possible effect on breast cancer rates ("EcoCancers," SN: 7/3/93, p.10). Might this also explain the progressively early onset of menarche in modern times? The standard explanation is improved nutrition, but I doubt that our preindustrial ancestors consistently ate that poorly.

*Merilee D. Karr  
Portland, Ore.*

"EcoCancers" provoked much thought and discussion at one of our group meetings. Since endometriosis is dependent upon estrogen, we follow very closely all findings that may help women with this condition to be less symptomatic.

I want to mention the work of Daniel F. Kripke at the Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation in La Jolla, Calif. He has demonstrated that exposure to 100-watt incandescent light can normalize long, irregular menstrual cycles. The amount of light he used was about one-tenth that used to treat Seasonal Affective Disorder. Dr. Kripke is convinced that the light affects menstrual cycles by somehow affecting the levels of various hormones involved in menstruation.

*Sharyn Thylan  
Executive Director  
Endometriosis Alliance of  
Greater New York, Inc.  
New York, N.Y.*

I am especially interested in the study by Scott Davis of 1,600 Seattle-area women. I wish he had had half of the women in the study wear cotton bras and use benign underarm deodorants. If plastic flasks and nylon carpet can create problems, why not chemicals and synthetic cloth used for years in the breast and lymph node area?

*Mary Jane Barrett  
Tucson, Ariz.*

**Psychosocial influences** may be just as important as the physical ones cited in the pathogenesis of breast cancer, particularly with respect to job stress. Stress can cause depression of immune system components responsible for resistance to malignant growth and can be a serious problem for women employed in a male-dominated workforce.

Working women also tend to marry and have children later in life or not at all. It is well known that the earlier childbirth occurs, the less likely a woman is to develop breast cancer. Pregnancy lowers concentrations of prolactin, which stimulates breast tissue growth and contributes to mammary cancer in experimental animals. Single, career women also have 14 times the risk of ovarian cancer as their homemaker counterparts (controls).

*Paul J. Rosch  
President  
American Institute of Stress  
Yonkers, N.Y.*

**The suggestion that** we are in the midst of a "breast cancer epidemic" is not supported by facts. During the period 1968 to 1983, the number of deaths in the United States from all

cancers increased slightly, as did the incidence of breast cancer. When these data are adjusted to account for risk factors of age, race, and sex, the mortality rate from all cancers is confirmed to have increased slightly, while the mortality rate from breast cancer has actually decreased.

In addition, long-term rodent studies do not support the postulate that chlorinated organic compounds, such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), increase breast cancer risk. The discussion of melatonin and its possible role in breast cancer is speculative, and the incrimination of electromagnetic fields and light as cancer-promoting agents transcends the supporting scientific evidence. Lastly, the findings regarding bisphenol-A should be put into perspective vis-à-vis the concentrations of the more potent natural estrogens, which are found in human or bovine milk in the range of approximately 0.2 to 6.0 parts per billion.

*S. A. Schulhof  
Technical Director  
Corporate Research and Development  
General Electric Company  
Schenectady, N.Y.*

*The focus of the story is more on increased incidence of breast cancer than decreased mortality from breast cancer.*

— J. Raloff

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All letters subject to editing.