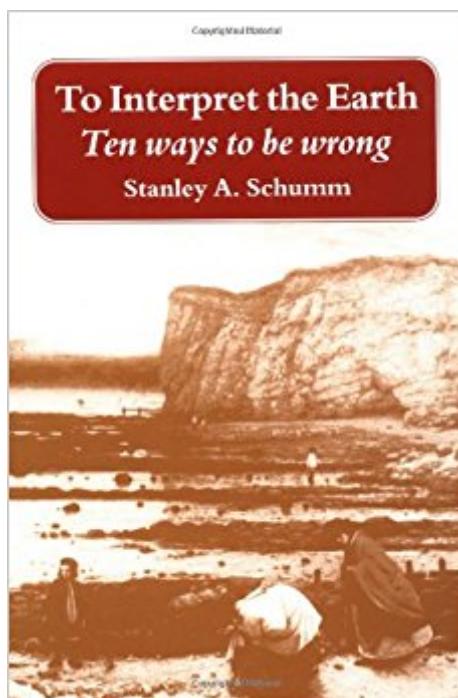


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To Interpret The Earth: Ten Ways To Be Wrong



Synopsis

To Interpret the Earth is a concise and imaginative discussion of the general basis behind the scientific approach to problems within the earth sciences. It is aimed primarily at students and beginning researchers and attempts to inform them about the scientific method behind the study of the complex and dynamic systems that comprise the earth's surface. The discussion is illustrated with examples of the sort of problems typically encountered in the study of the earth's surface, and general solutions based on a scientific approach are provided. The book will be of value to undergraduate and postgraduate students in earth and environmental science, and also to researchers at all levels.

Book Information

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"...stimulating, thought-provoking...a great way to kick-start discussions with your students and colleagues about the nature of complex Earth systems and how we investigate them."

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the study of the earth's surface, and general solutions based on a scientific approach are provided.

This is one of the foundational texts in my library. Although it is a slim and easy read (yes, steeped in fluvial geology) the content is pure gold and applicable to any field of inquiry. I have over 20 years as a consulting geologist and geophysicist and find that it is far too easy to believe that we know what happens beneath our feet. Maybe some of this can be attributed to modern computers, data visualization, high definition instrumentation, powerful models etc etc, and some is due to our tendency to mental laziness. Read this once a year, humble yourself a little bit, and keep looking for ways to ask better questions.

The multi-hypothesis approach Stanley Schumm describes, and the examples he gives resonate with my experiences in doing an honours thesis on river geomorphology. The difficulties due to the large scale of space and time with which earth scientists deal, and the incomplete evidence on which they must rely are nicely clarified, making the difficulties encountered in applying a standard approach feel like part of the field, rather than personal failings!! This is a very worthwhile book for the people it is intended to help, but not meant for light reading.

Reading it now, and it's a heck of a chore - the author makes several interesting points but they are lost in a sea of unusual descriptions of fluvial geology, which, if you don't have a background in, you will fail to understand the context of 3/4 of his examples. It's been a labor, and not one of love, reading this tome.

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