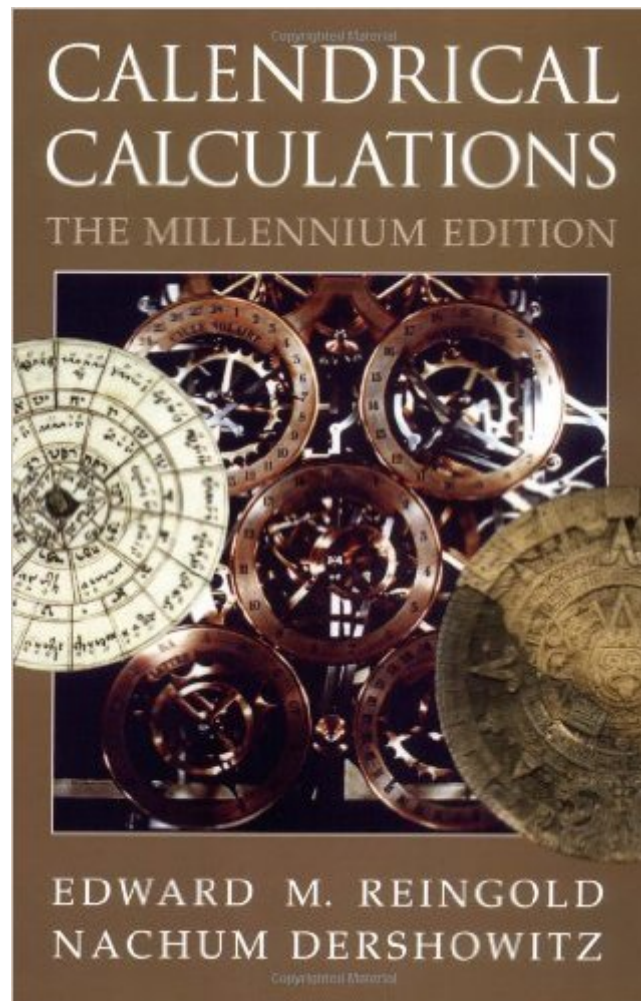


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Calendrical Calculations Millennium Edition



Synopsis

This new edition of the successful calendars book expands the treatment of the previous edition to new calendar variants. It frames the calendars of the world in a completely algorithmic form. The authors describe fourteen calendars and how they relate to one another: the present civil calendar (Gregorian), the recent ISO commercial calendar, the old civil calendar (Julian), the Coptic and (virtually identical) Ethiopic calendars, the Islamic (Moslem) calendar; the Baha'i, the Hebrew (Jewish) calendar, the Mayan calendars, the French Revolutionary calendar, the Chinese calendar, and both the old (mean) and new (true) Hindu (Indian) calendars. Easy conversion among these calendars is a by-product of the approach, as is the determination of secular and religious holidays. Calendrical Calculations makes accurate calendrical algorithms readily available for computer use with LISP and Java code for all the algorithms included on CD, and updates available on the Web.

Book Information

Paperback: 454 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press; 2nd edition (August 6, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0521777526

ISBN-13: 978-0521777520

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (12 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #3,003,668 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #36 in [Books > Computers & Technology > Programming > Software Design, Testing & Engineering > Coding Theory](#) #525 in [Books > Science & Math > Experiments, Instruments & Measurement > Time](#) #1327 in [Books > Computers & Technology > Programming > Algorithms](#)

Customer Reviews

The first edition was a masterpiece, but this one is even better! I've been involved in proof reading the new edition, and I've read the final draft. There are lots of popular books out there about calendars and the history of calendars. Unfortunately, most of them are filled with mistakes, especially when they talk about non-European calendars. The purpose of this book is to both give reliable information about the different calendars and to provide software for calendrical computations. My own field is the Chinese calendar, and this is one of only two books that gets it right (the other is the Explanatory Supplement to the Astronomical Almanac). If you want to get the

facts, there's no other comparable book. Remember to check out the web site of the authors to get the software and check out the applets. END

I highly recommend the book if you are interested in calendars as a hobby. If you are using this book for a project I suggest you look at this solely as a reference, since you will have to look elsewhere to have something you can use. The bibliography included is a good source. The details and discussions of how they approach problems like the visibility of sunset are amazing and really opened my eyes to the difficulties of creating an accurate calendar under different systems. This book covers everything I could think of and quite a few ideas I would never consider. I would give it 5 stars, except that the code and algorithms provided in the book are copyrighted and can not be used without explicit permission of the authors. I contacted the authors for a project I had, but it was determined that I could not use their algorithms since I intended to release under GNU license.

This book teaches you a lot of about the mathematics that needs to go behind calculations to determine date/time, and is truly a must-read book for people who want to write such software. However, I did find the equations hard to adopt for my own use, partially because the pseudocode fails to show exactly what the units were. For example, on the later chapters where one must take into account planetary position and such, it is extremely hard to find out exactly what each variable/number represent if you're not already very familiar with the subject. I believe most of the definitions are in fact in the book *somewhere*, but they are buried deep. This makes it extremely cumbersome and time consuming for the reader to actually try to implement the calculations. If the notation can be improved a bit, I think it would be even better book.

The previous review criticizes us for having a lengthy document reporting errata--but most of that document is not errata at all, but notes with extra material! C.U.P. introduced 10 spots where some lines were lost in the 2nd printing; when that was discovered they withdrew the printing and filled all orders with the hardback first printing. Perhaps "anonymous" would have been happier if we did not share the details of errors with readers, but we feel it is in the reader's interest to have the errata open to public.

The authors make the code available, but it's not free. That is, you can't take the code and use it in your project, unless you get a license from them. This was a big deal for me, which is why I'm giving it a one star review. If the code was freely available, I'd probably give it 3-4 stars. I found the content

frustratingly hard to decipher.

I bought this book, considering it the foremost authority on the subject of calendars and algorithms. While it does do an excellent job of explaining the calendars, and has good algorithms and is logical, a number of points I think should be dealt with, were not. Firstly, lisp code, is not universal. I found it hard to adapt to lisp, and I have had to resort to the Java code which I am more familiar. I think the authors should have chosen non-specific coding routines, and shown more mathematical, intuitive ways of presenting the information. The presentation of the algorithms is somewhat cumbersome - especially the definitions. Secondly, I deal with one calendar only, and my interest lies really, mainly with the Hebrew Calendar. I was disappointed that I had to refer to the Coptic Calendar for obtaining data for the Hebrew Calendar. It means I have to have code from both calendars, and I have to figure out what details I need from one system to the other. I would have liked to see each calendar dealt with as a totality in of itself. Thirdly, The errata list is too long. The authors should present the corrections without all the added information (however useful). I'm not prepared to sift through a hundred pages looking for mistakes (especially minor ones), however interesting the added material maybe. It should be separately listed so I can easily refer to the critical mistakes if need be. I did note that there were very few critical mistakes. Fourthly I felt the presentation of the algorithms were difficult to comprehend at first glance. Someone who is new to the field of algorithms, and presentation mathematically would find difficult to master. Was it not possible to simply state a definition and provide algorithmic reference, as opposed to viewing the function, knowing what it does, but not actually seeing the internal details of that function is very difficult to process. I felt the reference system was not clear. I could not fathom why at some stages the authors did not mention their sources on a particular topic (with a proper endnote reference), in the text itself, and at other times, there was adequate references to the end notes. There was some confusion I had on whether the numbers were referring to footnotes, endnotes or actual numbers. Otherwise it was a good summary of the overall calendars. And many points were raised and dealt with in a comprehensive manner. I would have liked an algorithm to process the Parshios (Torah Readings) for the Hebrew Calendar.

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