



To Mars and Beyond, Fast!: How Plasma Propulsion Will Revolutionize Space Exploration (Springer Praxis Books)

Erik Seedhouse, Franklin Chang-Diaz

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As advanced space propulsion moves slowly from science fiction to achievable reality, the Variable Specific Impulse Magnetoplasma Rocket, or VASIMR, is a leading contender for making 'Mars in a month' a possibility. The current book describes this landmark technology grounded in plasma physics and offering a practical technological solution for exploring beyond low Earth orbit in the decades to come. Developed by Ad Astra Rockets, which was founded by astronaut Franklin Chang-Diaz and backed by NASA, its first commercial tests are imminent. VASIMR heats plasma to extreme temperatures using radio waves. Strong magnetic fields then funnel this plasma out the back of the engine, creating thrust. The continuous propulsion may place long, fast interplanetary journeys within reach in the near future. While scientists dream of the possibilities of using fusion or well-controlled matter-antimatter interactions to propel spacecraft fast and far, that goal is still some way over the horizon. VASIMR at last provides a more attainable propulsion technology that is based on the matter-antimatter concept.

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