

**Arts**

Book Elucidates Physics

**"Warped Passages" by Lisa Randall**

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"Whimsical" is a term not often applied to physics.

From the lay perspective—or at least from those exposed only to Newtonian mechanics—the connotations of such a word seem diametrically opposite to the content of the field. Yet "Warped Passages: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Universe's Hidden Dimensions," by Professor of Physics Lisa Randall '83, adds a whole new dimension to physics—figuratively and literally.

This informal textbook argues that the universe has more than the traditionally recognized four dimensions. Randall proposes that our physical reality is simply a slice of space, a "membrane" or "brane," in a higher-dimensional bulk. She argues that the root "fabric" of the universe has five dimensions. This is hardly a pedestrian concept to the average reader, but Randall makes these abstractions accessible by inserting fictional passages and popular song lyrics at the head of each chapter.

With this popularizing cover, Randall charts the history behind current theoretical physics, moving from Newton to Einstein to string theory to her own work. And she suggests that new discoveries await in the not-so-distant future. At the same time, she recollects her own experiences as a theoretical physicist, enlivening her prose with references to afternoons spent at Toscanini's (the MIT branch, not the Harvard Square location). Ultimately, Randall gives her bulky 500-plus page text a (forgive the pun) more human dimension.