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- Boeing
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- Traffic Cam
- Obituaries

Local News

- News Archive
- Bridge Run
- Politics
- Columnists
- Special Reports
- Report News
- Text Alerts

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- Restaurant Inspections
- Parking Violations
- Sex Offender Locator



Physics gets down to earth

Sunday, October 30, 2011

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BOOK REVIEW



KNOCKING ON HEAVEN'S DOOR: How Physics and Scientific Thinking Illuminate the Universe and the Modern World. By Lisa Randall. Ecco. 442 pages. \$29.95.

Give Lisa Randall (or her publisher) credit for impeccable timing. "Knocking on Heaven's Door" arrived on the scene almost simultaneously with news of the possible discovery of particles faster than the speed of light.

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information about particle physics in general, and the Large Hadron Collider specifically, a relatively accessible volume covering those very subjects and more falls gently into our laps. How sweet is that?

A theoretical physicist and professor, Randall helps the rest of us brush up on the basics of quarks, bosons and forces strong and weak. We tour the LHC and learn how and what it is designed to detect. Along the way, she provides foundation lessons in various aspects of science.

Randall also meanders at the edges of more esoteric territory, contrasting the roles of science and religion in society and touching briefly on hot-button issues such as climate change. Her passion for the subject and her frustrations come through clearly, yet these are the weakest sections of the book, distracting from what is overall an interesting and informative effort.

Reviewer **Lisa Isringhausen**, a writer based in Charleston.

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