



## Discovering the Brain

*Sandra Ackerman, Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences*

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The brain ...

There is no other part of the human anatomy that is so intriguing. How does it develop and function and why does it sometimes, tragically, degenerate?

The answers are complex. In **Discovering the Brain**, science writer Sandra Ackerman cuts through the complexity to bring this vital topic to the public.

The 1990s were declared the "Decade of the Brain" by former President Bush, and the neuroscience community responded with a host of new investigations and conferences. **Discovering the Brain** is based on the Institute of Medicine conference, *Decade of the Brain: Frontiers in Neuroscience and Brain Research*.

**Discovering the Brain** is a "field guide" to the brain--an easy-to-read discussion of the brain's physical structure and where functions such as language and music appreciation lie. Ackerman examines

- How electrical and chemical signals are conveyed in the brain.
- The mechanisms by which we see, hear, think, and pay attention--and how a "gut feeling" actually originates in the brain.
- Learning and memory retention, including parallels to computer memory and what they might tell us about our own mental capacity.
- Development of the brain throughout the life span, with a look at the aging brain.

Ackerman provides an enlightening chapter on the connection between the brain's physical condition and various mental disorders and notes what progress can realistically be made toward the prevention and treatment of stroke and other ailments.

Finally, she explores the potential for major advances during the "Decade of the Brain," with a look at medical imaging techniques--what various technologies can and cannot tell us--and how the public and private sectors can contribute to continued advances in neuroscience.

This highly readable volume will provide the public and policymakers--and many scientists as well--with a helpful guide to understanding the many discoveries that are sure to be announced throughout the "Decade of the Brain."

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