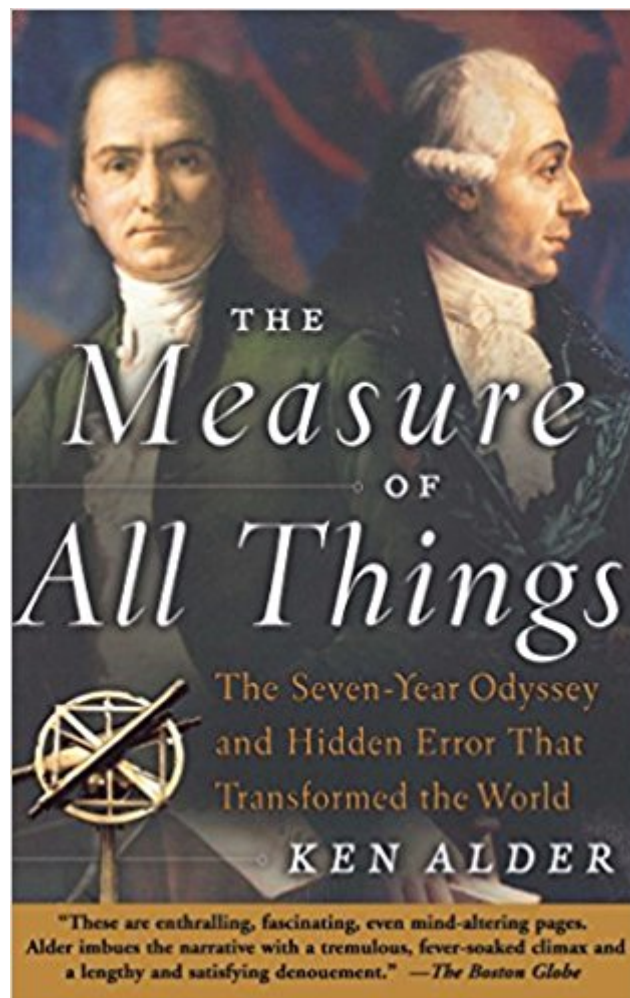




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# The Measure Of All Things: The Seven-Year Odyssey And Hidden Error That Transformed The World



## Synopsis

In June 1792, amidst the chaos of the French Revolution, two intrepid astronomers set out in opposite directions on an extraordinary journey. Starting in Paris, Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Delambre would make his way north to Dunkirk, while Pierre-François-Mathurin Laplace voyaged south to Barcelona. Their mission was to measure the world, and their findings would help define the meter as one ten-millionth of the distance between the pole and the equator—a standard that would be used for all people, for all time. This is the astonishing tale of one of history's greatest scientific adventures. Yet behind the public triumph of the metric system lies a secret error, one that is perpetuated in every subsequent definition of the meter. As acclaimed historian and novelist Ken Alder discovered through his research, there were only two people on the planet who knew the full extent of this error: Delambre and Laplace themselves. By turns a science history, detective tale, and human drama, *Measure* describes a quest that succeeded as it failed—and continues to enlighten and inspire to this day.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Boston Globe These are enthralling, fascinating, even mind-altering pages. Alder imbues the narrative with a tremulous, fever-soaked climax and a lengthy and satisfying denouement. The Philadelphia Inquirer One of those rare works that both rewrite history and capture the imagination. The New York Times Book Review Passes a central test of any popular work of history: it bathes the past in the light, life, and humanity of the eternal present.

Ken Alder is a professor of history and Milton H. Wilson Professor of the Humanities at Northwestern University. He is the author of *The Measure of All Things*, published to worldwide acclaim in fourteen languages. He lives in Evanston, Illinois.

To me, this was a fascinating and thought provoking work. It not only provides insight into the life and thought of the two historical figures but also provides vivid context and reflection on the meaning of what they did. A triumph of thorough research and excellent writing.

Scholarly work showing the evolution of the SI system. I was only vaguely aware of how the meter was defined so this was quite interesting. Even more interesting was the effort of some to introduce decimal time with 10 day weeks, 100 minute hours with 100 seconds, etc, and that France actually used this system for several years. In the meantime, I marvel at the continued use of the British units in the US despite how ill equipped it is to do anything efficiently. Change is indeed very hard.

This is an excellent narration that covers different issues: French revolution, standardization of measures and a field work to establish the length of the meter. Very well documented and supported.

Excelet book.

This looked like it would be a chore to read. But it was a delightful read on a subject that most authors could not have made interesting.

A rivetting tale of the dawn of the metric system amongst the French Revolution. Really well told and informative!

It's a paradox, the effort these two cientits made to establish a basic measure for all things and that in the English world still they use the old ones

Well written

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