

The International Society on General Relativity and Gravitation (ISGRG) will organize an online event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the publication of Misner, Thorne and Wheelers Gravitation (or MTW).

The meeting (hopefully the first in a series - stay tuned!) will be on May 3 at 8:30am Pacific Time = 11:30am Eastern US Time = 5:30pm Central European Time via zoom at the following link:

<https://zoom.us/j/91275367125?pwd=Y2lFS1VoM0N2M1dOcGdvMzR2QkNZZz09>

David Kaiser, who wrote the preface for the 2017 reprint of the book, will start off the meeting with an introduction. Both Charles Misner and Kip Thorne will participate. Kip will give a talk with the following title and abstract:

The Creation, Life, Death and Resurrection of MTW: A 50 Year Retrospective

In this talk I will describe

The historical context (a renaissance of relativity on the heels of a moribund era) in which Misner, Wheeler and I wrote Gravitation (MTW), and our motivations.

What each of us brought to our wonderful collaboration.

How we conceived, created and crafted this weird but wildly successful tome.

Our book's early reception and subsequent life.

Its death in a sequence of publisher acquisitions and its 2017 resurrection.

To trigger discussion, I will offer my views on several issues:

MTW's unusually vivid and enthusiastic writing style, and the mixed reception it received from our eminent colleagues e.g. S. Chandrasekhar's "It is written with the zeal of a missionary preaching to cannibals . but I (probably for historical reasons) have always been allergic to missionaries"

Its huge (for advanced physics texts of that era) ratio of words to equations. Why?

Our many "gimmicks" (in the word of one reviewer) and whether they "work": Two tracks, boxes that often extend over several pages, framed and unframed marginal notes, Part epigraphs, nearly a dozen fonts,

Our heavy emphasis on a geometric, as opposed to field-theoretic viewpoint, and Its contrast, for example, to Steven Weinberg's highly influential Gravitation and Cosmology.

MTW's appeal to nonscientists, such as the Berkeley street people of the Viet Nam War era.

MTW's influence on physics, astrophysics, and pedagogy over the decades.

What accounts for MTW selling 25,000 copies since its resurrection in 2017 (44 to 50 years after publication)? How useful for physicists is MTW today?