

Neuroscience

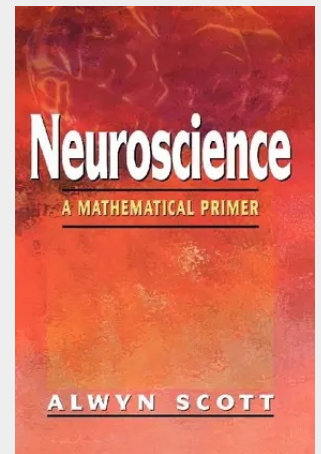
A Mathematical Primer

Arguably the most intricate dynamic object in the universe, the human brain is an unsounded source of wonder for the scientific community. The primary aim of this book is to provide both students and established investigators in the growing area of neuroscience with an appreciation of the roles that mathematics may play in helping to understand this enigmatic organ.

Along with discussion of results obtained by the neuroscience community, emphasis is placed on suggesting fruitful research problems for those planning to embark on mathematical studies in neuroscience. To make the overall perspectives understandable to philosophers and psychologists, essential features of the discussions are presented in ordinary English, with more detailed mathematical comments in appendices and footnotes. Although it attempts to maintain both clarity and biological relevance, this is not a text on the anatomy of nerve systems; thus readers should bring some knowledge of neurophysiology through other courses, associated studies, or laboratory research. It is a guiding theme throughout the book that the brain is organized into several quite different levels of dynamic activity. As will be seen, these levels are hierarchically structured, beginning with the molecular dynamics of intrinsic membrane proteins and proceeding upward, through the switching properties of active membrane patches and synapses, the emergence of impulses on active fibers, overall properties of individual neurons, and the growth of functional assemblies of interacting neurons, to the global dynamics of a brain. At each level of description, reality turns different facets of her mystery to us, and diverse phenomena make their contributions to the brain's collective behavior.

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