



The Works: Anatomy of a City

By Kate Ascher

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A fascinating guided tour of the ways things work in a modern city

Have you ever wondered how the water in your faucet gets there? Where your garbage goes? What the pipes under city streets do? How bananas from Ecuador get to your local market? Why radiators in apartment buildings clang? Using New York City as its point of reference, *The Works* takes readers down manholes and behind the scenes to explain exactly how an urban infrastructure operates. Deftly weaving text and graphics, author Kate Ascher explores the systems that manage water, traffic, sewage and garbage, subways, electricity, mail, and much more. Full of fascinating facts and anecdotes, *The Works* gives readers a unique glimpse at what lies behind and beneath urban life in the twenty-first century.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Kate Ascher could not have chosen a much drier topic for a book than water mains, parking meters, railroad classification yards, and the other doodads of city infrastructure. But in Ascher's captivating book, *The Works*, the innards of New York City come alive. Wonderfully illustrated, the book combines text, maps, and other graphics to tell the story of the systems that keep America's greatest city running smoothly. How are traffic lights coordinated? How do potholes form and which areas have streets with the best "smoothness score"? How is mail processed? What happens when you flush the toilet? Ascher, who has a PhD in government from the London School of Economics and is now executive vice president of the New York City Economic Development Corporation, dissects the colorful workings of all these systems and much more.

The Works contains a section on pretty much every aspect of the Big Apple's infrastructure. You'll learn the mystery of the shiny silver tanks that have become a familiar sight on New York streets. (They prevent moisture from damaging underground phone lines.) Ascher explains how the city's 23 million daily pieces of mail are processed. We also learn about the 27-mile underground pneumatic mail tube that used to carry canisters with 500 letters up to 30 miles per hour around Manhattan. Also interesting: the story of the nine-foot-long, 800-pound robot submarine that city engineers send to probe leaks in the Delaware Aqueduct--which, it might interest you to know, is the world's longest continuous underground tunnel. And you'll find out all about Colonel Waring and his "White Wings." A great coffee table book for New York lovers or anyone with a curiosity bone. --Alex Roslin

Review

"*The Works* is both a reference guide and a geeky pleasure."

—*Time Out New York*

"It's a rare person who won't find something of interest in *The Works*, whether it's an explanation of how a street-sweeper works or the view of what's down a manhole."

—*New York Post*

About the Author

Kate Ascher serves on the faculty of Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation and manages Happold Consulting's U.S. practice. Prior to taking up her current positions, she worked at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, and Vornado Realty Trust. Her other books include *The Heights: Anatomy of a Skyscraper* and *The Way to Go: Moving by Sea, Land, and Air*.

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Darren Marshall:

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