Presentation: OP100-OP322-12 Focusing x-ray telescopes
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Overview

Primary Author:
O'Dell, Stephen NASA Marshall Space Flight Ctr. United States steve.o'dell@nasa.gov

Co-Authors:
Brissenden, Roger Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States rjb@cfa.harvard.edu
Davis, William Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States wdavis@cfa.harvard.edu
Elsner, Ronald NASA Marshall Space Flight Ctr. United States ron.elsner@nasa.gov
Elvis, Mark Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States melvis@cfa.harvard.edu
Gaetz, Terraria Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States tgaetz@cfa.harvard.edu
Gorenstein, Paul Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States pgorenstein@cfa.harvard.edu
Gubarev, Mikhail Marshall Space Flight Ctr. United States mikhail.v.gubarev@nasa.gov
Jerius, Diab Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States djerius@cfa.harvard.edu
Juda, Michael Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States mjuda@cfa.harvard.edu
Kolodziejczak, Jeffery NASA Marshall Space Flight Ctr. United States kolodz@nasa.gov
Murray, Stephen Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States smurray@cfa.harvard.edu
Petre, Robert NASA Goddard Space Flight Ctr. United States robert.petre-1@nasa.gov
Podgorski, William Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States wpodgorski@cfa.harvard.edu
Ramsey, Brian NASA Marshall Space Flight Ctr. United States brian.ramsey@nasa.gov
Reid, Paul Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States preid@cfa.harvard.edu
Saha, Timo NASA Goddard Space Flight Ctr. United States timo.t.saha@nasa.gov
Schwartz, Daniel Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States dschwartz@cfa.harvard.edu
Trolier-McKinstry, Susan Pennsylvania State University United States STMckinstry@psu.edu
Weisskopf, Martin Marshall Space Flight Ctr. United States martin.c.weisskopf@nasa.gov
Wilke, Rudeger Pennsylvania State University United States rhw11@psu.edu
Wolk, Scott Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory United States swolk@cfa.harvard.edu
Zhang, William NASA Goddard Space Flight Ctr. United States william.w.zhang@nasa.gov

Abstract Text for Online or Printed Programs:
During the half-century history of x-ray astronomy, focusing x-ray telescopes---through increased effective area and finer angular resolution---have improved sensitivity by 8 orders of magnitude. Here, we review previous and current x-ray-telescope missions. Next, we describe the planned next-generation x-ray-astronomy facility---the International X-ray Observatory (IXO). We conclude with an overview of a concept for the next next-generation facility---Generation X. Its scientific objectives will require very large areas (about 10000 m^2) of highly-nested, lightweight grazing-incidence mirrors, with exceptional (about 0.1-arcsec) angular resolution. Achieving this angular resolution with lightweight mirrors will likely require on-orbit adjustment of alignment and figure.

Abstract Text for Technical Review Purposes:
High-energy astrophysics is a relatively young scientific field, made possible by space-borne telescopes. During the half-century history of x-ray astronomy, focusing x-ray telescopes---through increased effective area and finer angular resolution---have improved sensitivity by a factor of a 100 million. This technological advance has enabled numerous exciting discoveries and increasingly detailed study of the high-energy universe---including accreting (stellar-mass and super-massive) black holes, accreting and isolated neutron stars, pulsar-wind nebulae, shocked plasma in supernova remnants, hot thermal plasma in clusters of galaxies. As the largest structures in the universe, galaxy clusters constitute a unique laboratory for measuring the gravitational effects of dark matter and of dark energy. Here, we review the history of x-ray astronomy---especially, the major x-ray-telescope missions---and highlight some of the scientific results enabled by these telescopes. Next, we describe the planned next-generation x-ray-astronomy facility---the International X-ray Observatory (IXO). We conclude with an overview of a concept for the next next-generation facility---Generation X. The scientific objectives of such a mission will require very large areas (about 10000 m^2) of highly-nested lightweight grazing-incidence mirrors with exceptional (about 0.1-arcsec) angular resolution. Achieving this angular resolution with lightweight mirrors will likely require on-orbit adjustment of alignment and figure.