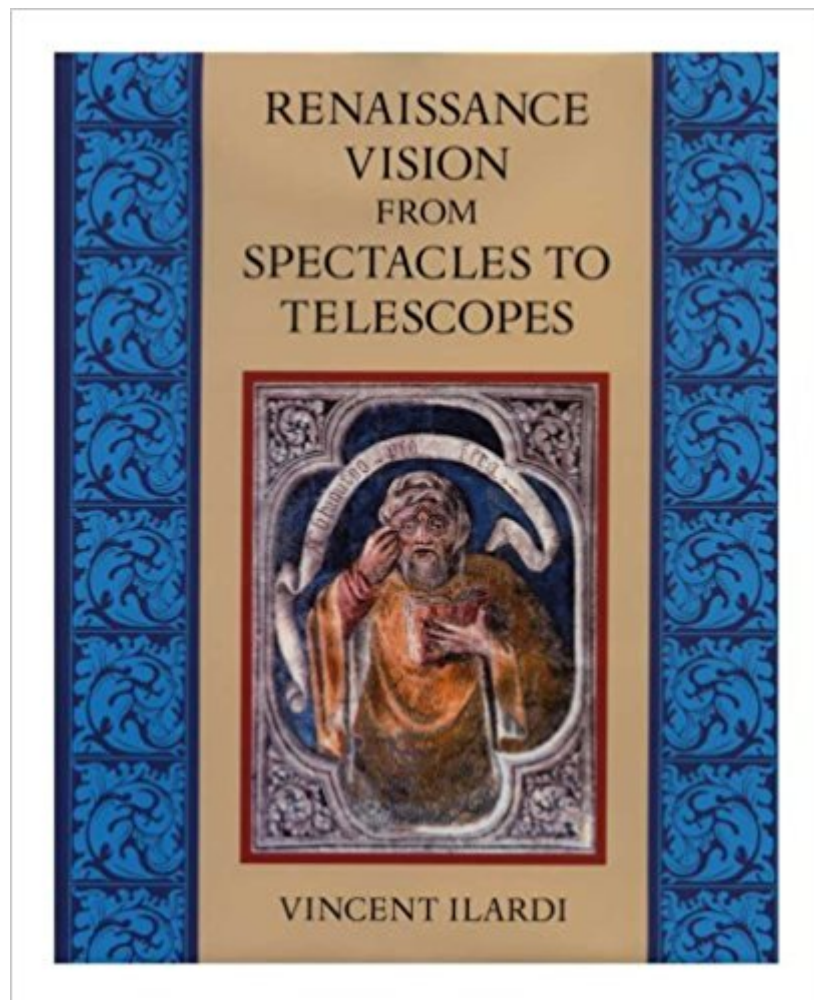




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Renaissance Vision From Spectacles To Telescopes (Memoirs Of The American Philosophical Society)



Synopsis

This book deals with the history of eyeglasses from their invention in Italy ca. 1286 to the appearance of the telescope three centuries later. By the end of the 16th century eyeglasses were as common in western & central Europe as desktop computers are in western developed countries today. Eyeglasses served an important technological function at both the intellectual & practical level, not only easing the textual studies of scholars but also easing the work of craftsmen/small businessmen. An important synthesis of this book is that Florence, rather than Venice, seems to have dominated the commercial market for eyeglasses during the 15th century, when two crucial developments occurred: the ability to grind convex lenses for various levels of presbyopia & the ability to grind concave lenses for the correction of myopia. As a result, eyeglasses could be made almost to prescription by the early 17th century. Illus.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ilardi has produced the definitive history of spectacles aided in part by economic historians and others who over the decades sent him relevant records discovered in Florentine, English, and other European archives. At a time when many historians of technology and of material culture conceive their work contextually or in terms of cultural meaning, this study is resolutely focused on the empirical evidence for spectacles as it has been found for various times and places. Ilardi has done

more than expand our knowledge of a particular area of history. Over the decades during which he carried out his investigation and with the warmly appreciated help of scholars in other archives, most importantly the Florentine, he has created a substantial history of eyeglasses that had not existed before. --Pamela O. Long, *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*

The research for this book began with a chance archival discovery in the early 1960s. Ilardi, a diplomatic historian, came across an order dated from between 1462 and 1466 and placed by the duke of Milan for three hundred pairs of spectacles to eyeglass makers in Florence. Over the decades during which he carried out his investigation and with the warmly appreciated help of scholars in other archives, most importantly the Florentine, he has created a substantial history of eyeglasses that had not existed before.

Ilardi made the history of eyeglasses his life's work. His careful tracing of the commercialization of spectacles in Renaissance Florence will be the standard for years to come.

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