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City of Light

Jeff Hecht takes you through the fascinating history of communications using light starting in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt where glass existed 4,500 year ago. Hecht mentions the French use of semaphores during the Napoleonic Wars and I first read about their destruction by the English Fleet in the Hornblower series of naval novels. Hecht does not mention the use of smoke signals by the American Indians. Smoke and fire signals were also used in China, Mesopotamia, Ancient Greece and Egypt.

Hecht's story really starts with the luminous fountains built at the close of the 19th Century where light was guided inside streams of water for the delight of the spectators. He takes the reader through the development of guided light up to the single mode fibers in use in 1999. You meet all the personalities that made it happen in a fast paced narrative that at times takes on the airs of a mystery novel or thriller. Who will patent first? Will Bell steal Corning's formula?

I find that [City of Light: The Story of Fiber Optics](#), is an excellent introduction to fiber optics for the technologically challenged because it is a book written for the layman.

Denny

"Demand creates queues. Supply gets rid of them."

[Software Times](#)