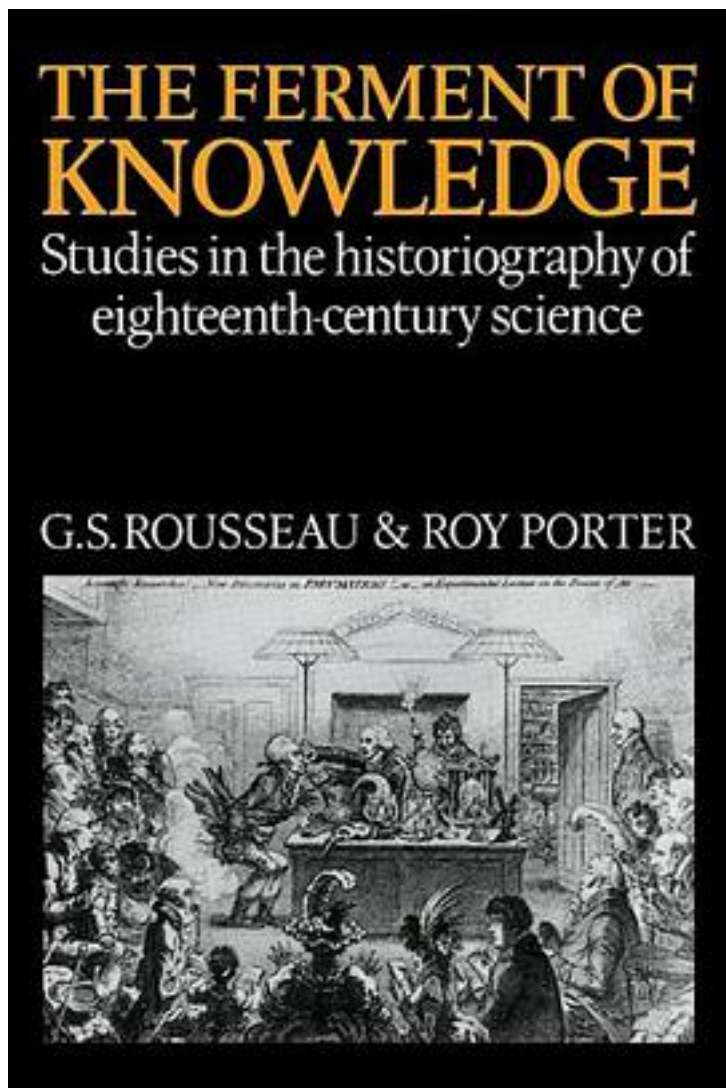


The Ferment of Knowledge



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The thirteen original essays in this book examine the status and development of the sciences in the eighteenth century. The last generation has seen a revolution in the methodology adopted by historians of science: The development of science is no longer described as a steady progress towards truth - certainties have given way to questions. The essays in this volume scrutinize these changing perspectives in historiography and recommend paths for future study. The eighteenth century has been a neglected and much-misunderstood era in the development of science, all too often viewed as something of a trough between the towering achievements of the 'Scientific Revolution' and the nineteenth century. Yet it was a period of notable developments; it saw the establishment of such fields as electricity and heat, the 'chemical revolution', the new science of gases, the isolation of oxygen, the nebular hypothesis in cosmology, the foundation of rational mechanics, and the birth pangs of biology, geology and psychology. It was, indeed, an age when knowledge was in ferment.

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