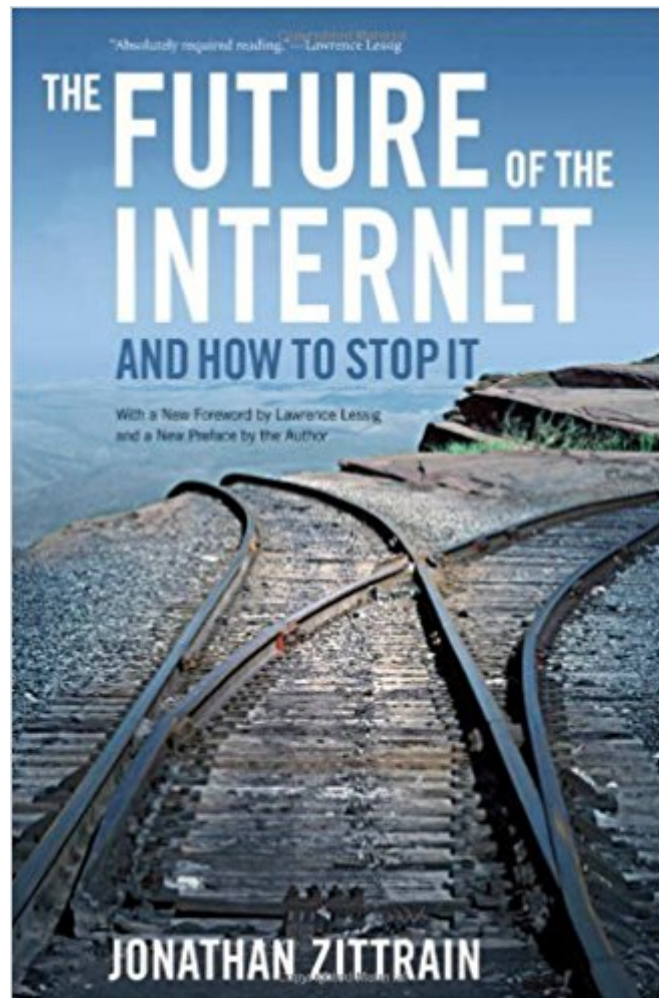




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The Future Of The Internet--And How To Stop It



Synopsis

This extraordinary book explains the engine that has catapulted the Internet from backwater to ubiquity and reveals that it is sputtering precisely because of its runaway success. With the unwitting help of its users, the generative Internet is on a path to a lockdown, ending its cycle of innovation and facilitating unsettling new kinds of control. iPods, iPhones, Xboxes, and TiVos represent the first wave of Internet-centered products that cannot be easily modified by anyone except their vendors or selected partners. These “tethered appliances” have already been used in remarkable but little-known ways: car GPS systems have been reconfigured at the demand of law enforcement to eavesdrop on the occupants at all times, and digital video recorders have been ordered to self-destruct thanks to a lawsuit against the manufacturer thousands of miles away. New Web 2.0 platforms like Google mash-ups and Facebook are rightly touted but their applications can be similarly monitored and eliminated from a central source. As tethered appliances and applications eclipse the PC, the very nature of the Internet and its “generativity” or innovative character is at risk. The Internet’s current trajectory is one of lost opportunity. Its salvation, Zittrain argues, lies in the hands of its millions of users. Drawing on generative technologies like Wikipedia that have so far survived their own successes, this book shows how to develop new technologies and social structures that allow users to work creatively and collaboratively, participate in solutions, and become true “netizens.”

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Zittrain sends out a resounding wake up call ... Jimbo Wales, founder of Wikipedia, pulls no punches with his advice. "The best way to save the Internet is to turn your laptop off until you've read this book." --The Oxford Times

The book ... makes fascinating reading for those who have watched the network grow from its roots in the research community into today's global channel for communications, commerce and cultural expression. --BBC News

Jonathan Zittrain does what no one has before--he eloquently and subtly pinpoints the magic that makes Wikipedia, and the Internet as a whole, work. The best way to save the Internet is to turn off your laptop until you've read this book."--Jimbo Wales, Founder, Wikipedia

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Jimbo Wales, Founder, Wikipedia -- Jimbo Wales

The most compelling book ever written on why a transformative technology's trajectory threatens to stifle that technology's greatest promise for society. Zittrain offers convincing road maps for redeeming that promise.

Laurence H. Tribe, Carl M. Loeb University Professor and Professor of Constitutional Law, Harvard Law School -- Laurence H. Tribe

A superb and alarming discussion, from one of the most astute and forward-looking analysts of the Internet. Zittrain explains how the glorious promise of the Internet might not be realized;and points the way toward reducing the current risks. Absolutely essential reading."

Cass Sunstein, Karl N. Llewellyn Distinguished Service Professor of Jurisprudence, The University of Chicago Law School, and co-author of "Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness" -- Cass Sunstein

This book is fundamental. It will define the debate about the future of the Internet, long after we haven't stopped it. Absolutely required reading.

Lawrence Lessig, Professor, Stanford Law School, and author of "Free Culture" and "The Future of Ideas" -- Lawrence Lessig

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This remarkably researched and highly entertaining book is a must-read for all who take

the ubiquitous nature of the Internet in our everyday lives for granted. The future of the internet is NOT a positive one, unless we all work collaboratively to ensure its lasting success. Zittrain's analysis is first-class and should be widely heeded by leaders from all sectors of society."-Dr. Klaus Schwab, Executive Chairman and Founder of the World Economic Forum -- Dr. Klaus Schwab "A superb and alarming discussion, from one of the most astute and forward-looking analysts of the Internet. Zittrain explains how the glorious promise of the Internet might not be realized-and points the way toward reducing the current risks. Absolutely essential reading."-Cass Sunstein, Karl N. Llewellyn Distinguished Service Professor of Jurisprudence, The University of Chicago Law School, and co-author of Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness -- Cass Sunstein

A conversation with Jonathan Zittrain

Q: You have a curious title to your book. Most people think the Internet is a good thing, so why try to stop it?

A: The Internet is a great thing; and it's largely a historical accident that we have it at all. As late as the early 1990s, people in the know assumed that one of a handful of proprietary networks would be the network of the future. Those networks carefully groomed the content to be presented to people. The Internet came out of left field as an entity with no plan for content, no CEO; not even a main menu. PCs are similarly surprisingly successful. Unlike "information appliances" such as smart typewriters and word processors, the programs on a PC can come from anywhere. This has vaulted the PC into the front lines of business environments, not just homes. Unfortunately that's not how the future is shaping up. Our own choices, made in fear, are causing the most valuable features of our modern technology to slip away.

Q: You warn that the Internet, and the computers that sit on the ends of it, will become more like appliances if we aren't careful. What do you mean by that?

A: Devices like Apple's iPhone are incredibly sophisticated; and flexible. But they can be programmed only by their vendors. That's very, very limiting; and yet consumers will ask for that because it makes for a more consistent experience, and because our generative PC and Internet technologies are less and less useful due to spam, spyware, viruses, and other exploitations of their openness. We need to combat these exploitations in ways that don't sacrifice fundamental openness.

Q: Is it possible to have it both ways: to have a secure Internet that remains open to the possibilities you describe in your book?

A: Yes, and the book goes into detail about how we might thread this needle. If we fail, we return to the old models of consumer technology that we had already (and rightly) forgotten thanks to the Internet's success.

--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

If you are into the destructive things people have done using the InterWeb, then this is the book for you. There are fascinating tidbits in addition to the many things we all seem to know. Well worth the read.

The Future of the Internet and How to Stop It is a major work of business, legal and policy research that will be less accessible to most people, but important to those looking to understand the future direction of today's ecommerce world. Zittrain is both a technologist and a lawyer and he appears to be writing this book more to influence policy and thinking rather than proposing a specific solution. This is fine, in my opinion, as Zittrain provides two important frameworks that define new ways of thinking about the net and its impact: the notion of generative technology and the idea that the value of that technology is moving from the network to the endpoints. The book describes these ideas and develops them into a range of policy and technical decisions facing business, political and judicial leaders. In the Future of the Internet, Jonathan Zittrain provides a detailed analysis of the development of the Internet, the nature of networks, and the evolution of technology. This book concentrates on the central elements of what Zittrain calls "generative" solutions. A generative solution is one that provides a basis for innovation, new products and new sources of value through experimentation and individual innovation (ala Chesbrough's open innovation). Zittrain sees the Internet and the PC as generative technologies, which they clearly are. However he sees generative technologies go through a pattern where the openness and high levels of trust that made them generative and attracted new solutions soon fall prey to fraud, abuse and outright criminal activities. Zittrain argues that this is what the Internet is going through now as SPAM, Malware, Phishing and other forms of cyber crime and mischief are eroding the value of the Internet as a generative platform. The book makes this argument in a very logical way with good examples. This takes up the first part of the book and is perhaps the best part. Zittrain's idea is that as these generative technologies become compromised, the value potential moves from the network that connects devices to the devices themselves. Here is where he introduces the notion of appliance devices that are purpose built, not readily programmable at the functional level and give the consumer more protection and the provider more control. The notion that the value is moving away from the network is very intriguing; particularly interesting given the recent warm reception of appliances such as the iPhone, Wii, Tivo and others. Overall this book is not for the faint of heart, nor for the casual reader of business and technology books. The text is well written, loaded with examples and details that will make for good cocktail party stories, but it is more of a policy book

and a scholarly work than a business text. CIOs should read the first half of the book with great interest as it lays out a new way of thinking about the network. Corporate development officers at technology companies should read the whole book as it describes a possible legal, regulatory and economic framework for the future of technology. Business leaders should read the first part of the book to understand the true nature and exposure they have in the current generative Internet era.

I read this book on my Kindle. Ironically this book describes why my Kindle (and for that matter your iPhone) may represent a problem for the information technology industry (and for all of us as individuals). Zittrain describes how open devices and software platforms can facilitate innovation and how closed platforms don't. Further, he discusses how these emerging closed device platforms risk converting the internet into a tool for simplified corporate or governmental control of what you see and hear. This book, along with "The Big Switch" by Nicholas Carr, challenge the conventional cyber-utopian assumption that the internet will continue to be a wide open landscape where you independently (and privately) choose when and where you can go. The battle is for control of the end-point device. Zittrain has certainly spotted the dark side of Web 2.0. He has specifically illuminated those selected design assumptions within and around the internet that can shift the net from a tool by which you manage your life -- to a tool by which others manage your life. This is a serious book that merges the future of technology with public policy (and without ever actually discussing public policy -- he instead wisely focuses on the implications of certain technology architectural choices). "The Future of the Internet" is one of the first books to directly question the sustainability of cyber-libertarian assumptions about the internet. If you cherish those long standing assumptions, you may want to spend a little time on this book.

The field of cyberlaw, or the law of the Internet -- a field I helped birth (Code: And Other Laws of Cyberspace, Version 2.0) has suffered because people like me have spent too much time cheerleading, and not enough time focusing the world on the real problems and threats that the Internet has produced. This book, in my view, radically changes the field. Zittrain has lived with network technologies since he was a kid (he ran the Compuserve Sys-Op forum before he could drive a car); he has watched the field develop first hand. And this book delivers a powerful understanding of what made the Internet great, and what we need to do to preserve it. Here's one picture -- a single slice -- to understand the point: As Zittrain convincingly demonstrates, we're facing an 911 event. Not an Al Qaeda attack, but a significant, and devastating attack on Internet infrastructure, caused by one of very many who have deployed "malware" to the Internet. They may

not intend it. But their work will, over the next 5 years, cause this event. And when it happens, governments will have everything they need to argue for a radical change in the freedom of the Internet. Both the freedom to innovate and the freedom to communicate/create/share. Unless we prepare now to resist the bad in that change -- by recognizing the threat and developing mature, sensible responses to the threat rather than by denying the threat and pretending someone the invisible mouse of the Internet will take care of everything -- we will lose, Zittrain convincingly argues, much of the potential of the net. Best title, brilliantly and beautifully argued, and right: read this book.

Struggling to read. This is clearly written for someone way more knowledgeable about the subject than I am. Still plowing through it though, because I'm curious to find what Zittrain's thinks the solution for internet freedom will be.

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