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Clarion Review ★★★★½ TECHNOLOGY

Augmented Mind: AI, Humans, and the Superhuman Revolution

Alex Bates
Neocortex Ventures (May 14, 2019)
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Augmented Mind *is a realistic and exciting look at the future of digital technology.*

Alex Bates's *Augmented Mind* is an encouraging and realistic look at the potential future of AI.

The premise of this short, sound, and fascinating book is that computers can out-perform humans at certain tasks, such as sifting data and making rapid calculations, but lack the awareness needed to develop the complex combination of knowledge, experience, creativity, and ambition that humans bring to the table. Creating systems that augment human intelligence with artificial intelligence, Bates argues, will help us to achieve greater freedom, prosperity, security, and peace.

With a background in math, science, computer tech, and neuroscience, and having helped to create the kinds of human-AI interface systems the book discusses, Bates brings credibility to the table. His even chapters follow a rough arrangement from history toward the future, pausing for a chapter on human neuroplasticity and inventiveness followed by a chapter on how AI systems work. Each chapter is broken into brief sections that are easy to navigate.

Comprehensive but succinct, this brief book is all wheat and no chaff. It takes care to place the AI revolution in its historical context, citing examples from *Frankenstein* and the Industrial Revolution to illustrate how new inventions are followed by misgivings that precede utilizing and building on them. Showing AI as part of this cycle casts it as a new tool to use, rather than a creation to be feared. It also sets the stage for envisioning how we're likely to use AI going forward.

Calling systems that combine human and AI "centaurs," the book cites the example of AI monitoring changes too slight for human recognition, but that are meaningful to human interpreters. It argues that centaur systems will save companies and consumers millions, prevent accidents that damage the environment, and save lives.

Strong at showing how individuals can participate in centaur systems tailored to their individual needs, the text addresses readers in the science and technology world and suggests ways that artists, musicians, and others might deploy AI to their advantage. It raises provocative questions in the course of this work.

Absent are discussions of personal data security that arise around interactive systems like Alexa that harvest personal data. Several acronyms are used and initially explained in the book, but there's no glossary to track this terminology. A thorough bibliography suggests sources for further study.

Engaging, accessible, and concise, *Augmented Mind* is a realistic and exciting look at the future of digital technology.

SUSAN WAGGONER (April 30, 2019)

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