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The Software Society: Cultural and Economic Impact

William Meisel
Trafford Publishing (Jan 31, 2013)
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The Software Society by William Meisel is a unique look at how computer programs have changed life in ways that are both technological and sociological.

The first part of the book looks at software and society from a cultural perspective—tracking trends, examining the relationship between people and technology, and looking at the complicated nature of privacy. The second part of the book, roughly equal in length, examines the economic elements—how software helps and hinders employment, the use of the human-computer connection to solve economic struggles, and the ways tax revenue spurs on technological innovation.

Meisel ponders questions most people wouldn't think to ask, like "What do trends in software imply about what it means to be human?" But his careful, clear history and explanation of software and its implications will slowly pull readers into his method of questioning.

The book's final chapter, "Building the Future," emphasizes what will already be clear to readers: "The trends highlighted in this book are more of an observation than a prediction." Meisel's approach to the future, and to this book, is to learn from the past and use that knowledge as a springboard toward the future.

Meisel's credentials are impressive: a PhD in electrical engineering, teaching experience at the University of Southern California, computer-science management at an aerospace company, and operating his own speech-recognition company. He is also the author of more than seventy published papers and books.

The cover has a textbook feel, which fits the tone of the book's contents, but the typeface, print quality, and color are unpolished-looking and unappealing. It gives readers the impression that the book will be bland, and as a result they may find Meisel's slow pace to be boring rather than what it really is: methodical.

The book has a useful six-page reference section that lists all the books and articles Meisel cites, as well as a number of his own works. *The Software Society* also has a well-organized table of contents—listed by part, chapter, and section—that helps readers find the information they're looking for and see how ideas progress throughout the book.

The book will appeal most to readers who have a knowledge of technological sciences as well as readers who are versed in the latest tech offerings. Meisel's approach will find its niche with people who want to examine the effects of technology from a variety of perspectives on a macro level. His writing is clear and easy to understand for most college-educated readers.

While the book is best suited for a small segment of readers, those readers won't find the information Meisel presents or his approach to it anywhere else.

MELISSA WUSKE (May 30, 2013)

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