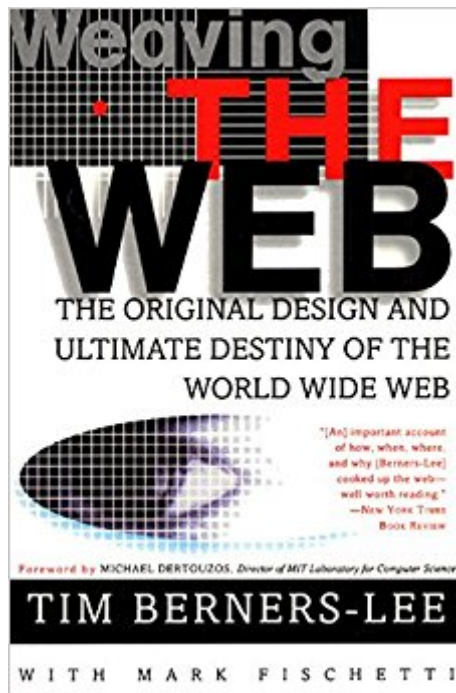


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Weaving The Web: The Original Design And Ultimate Destiny Of The World Wide Web



Synopsis

Named one of the greatest minds of the 20th century by Time, Tim Berners-Lee is responsible for one of that century's most important advancements: the world wide web. Now, this low-profile genius-who never personally profitted from his invention -offers a compelling portrait of his invention. He reveals the Web's origins and the creation of the now ubiquitous http and www acronyms and shares his views on such critical issues as censorship, privacy, the increasing power of software companies , and the need to find the ideal balance between commercial and social forces. He offers insights into the true nature of the Web, showing readers how to use it to its fullest advantage. And he presents his own plan for the Web's future, calling for the active support and participation of programmers, computer manufacturers, and social organizations to manage and maintain this valuable resource so that it can remain a powerful force for social change and an outlet for individual creativity.

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Customer Reviews

Weaving The Web is a wonderful blending of three distinct subjects: the history of the World Wide Web, an astute analysis of the web's "current" state, that is, where it stands in the middle of 1999, and where it's founder believes and thinks it is headed. It is difficult to believe the accuracy of Berners-Lee's vision of what the web could be in the time that the web was just a dream, and how he worked to achieve it. He also dispels the common belief that he either disdains the accumulation of wealth that could have been his had he chosen a different path, or that he envies those

individuals who have made millions (or billions) by building on the web's humble beginnings. He also does not begrudge the commercialization over the web, as many academics did at the time when the web was viewed primarily as a medium for the free sharing of ideas and information. Berners-Lee talks in depth about the social implications of technology, and indeed the World Wide Web is a social beast as much as it is a technological one. He does separate, however, the duties of bodies like the W3C whose sole purpose is to facilitate and strengthen the standards and protocols that are providing new richness and robustness to the web. This is clearly highlighted in his discussion of PICS, which allows for creation of rules that can facilitate filtering of objectionable material on the web. Berners-Lee makes the clear distinction between those who create the PICS technology, and those who decide how it will be implemented. It is evident from this book that Berners-Lee is far from finished in his duties.

I have mixed feelings about this book. On the one hand, Berners-Lee has written a book that not only describes the invention and evolution of the Web, but also inspires commitment to high principles and deep introspection. Berners-Lee is clearly an intellect of the highest caliber, and his commitment to democratic principles in developing the Web is, to me, profoundly admirable. On the other hand, the author seems to labor under the common curse of most software engineers - an inability to clearly communicate ideas and concepts to the non-specialist. Though he tries in words to communicate these concepts, I believe that, overall, his attempt fails unless the reader first has some exposure to, and familiarity with the world-wide Web - an unacceptable pre-requisite for a book directed at the non-specialist. The really unfortunate thing about this is that it does not need to be so. For example, the book has no figures and no tables (though it does have a glossary of the hundreds of acronyms used and a good index). A few well-designed figures and summary tables would help a great deal to unify concepts that are just plain fuzzy and awkward when described with words alone. If you've ever seen a Web site and hypertext you can pretty well follow along with the written descriptions, but how much more helpful it would have been to have a few (color) pictures illustrating what a well-constructed Web site with hyper text looks like. The book does have its fine points. It is a first-hand look at how the Web came into existence, and how it is continuing to evolve today. It also explains efforts to make the Web more valuable.

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