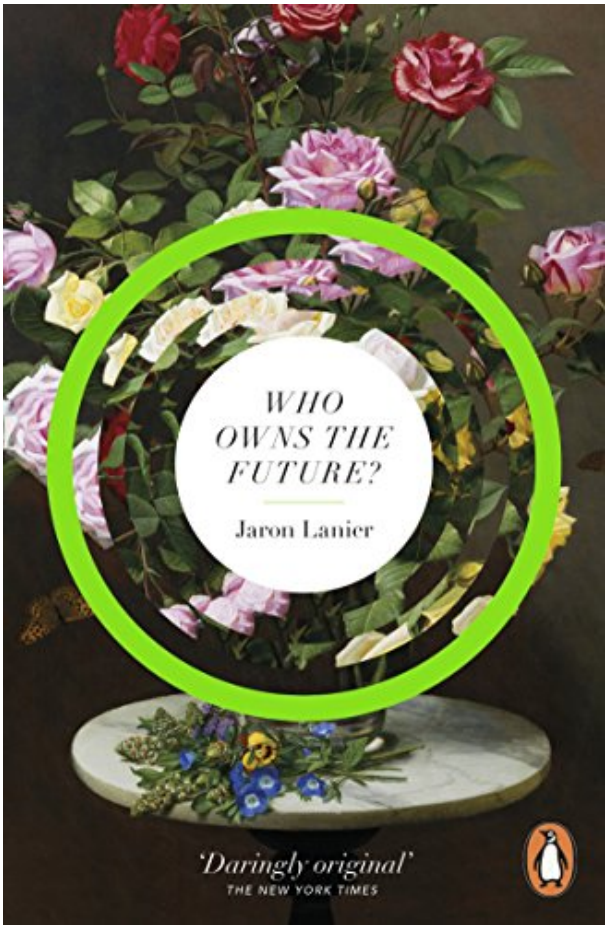
WHO OWNS THE FUTURE? BY JARON LANIER



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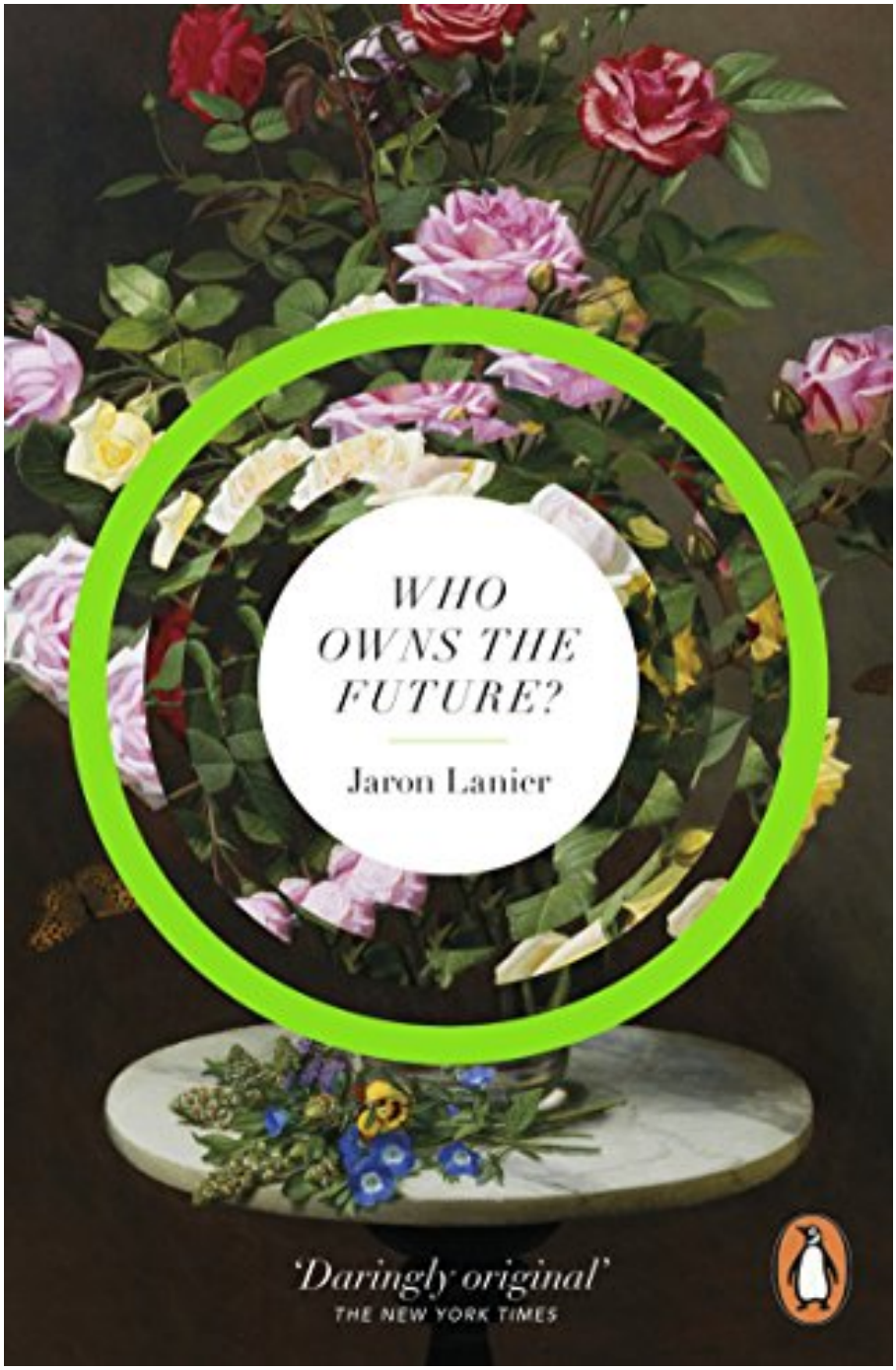

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Amazon.com Review
An Amazon Best Book of the Month, May 2013: Jaron Lanier's last book, You Are Not a Gadget, was an influential criticism of Web 2.0's crowd-sourced backbone. In Who Owns the Future?, Lanier is interested in how network technologies affect our culture, economy, and collective soul. Lanier is talking about pretty heady stuff--the monopolistic power of big tech companies (dubbed "Siren Servers"), the flattening of the middle class, the obscuring of humanity--but he has a gift for explaining sophisticated concepts with clarity. In fact, what separates Lanier from a lot of techno-futurists is his emphasis on the maintaining humanism and accessibility in technology. In the most ambitious part of the book, Lanier expresses what he believes to be the ideal version of the networked future--one that is built on two-way connections instead of one-way relationships, allowing content, media, and other innovations to be more easily attributed (including a system of micro-payments that lead back to its creator). Is the two-way networked vision of the internet proposed in Who Owns the Future quixotic? Even Lanier seems unsure, but his goal here is to establish a foundation for which we should strive. At one point, Lanier jokingly asks sci-fi author William Gibson to write something that doesn't depict technology as so menacing. Gibson replies, "Jaron, I tried. But it's coming out dark." Lanier is able to conjure a future that's much brighter, and hopefully in his imagination, we are moving closer to that. --Kevin Nguyen

Q&A with Jaron Lanier

Q. Years ago, in the early days of networking, you and your friends asserted that information should be free. What made you change your tune?

A. In the big picture, a great new technology that makes the world more efficient should result in waves of new opportunity. That’s what happened with, say, electricity, telephones, cars, plumbing, fertilizers, vaccinations, and many other examples. Why on earth have the early years of the network revolution been associated with recessions, austerity, jobless recoveries, and loss of social mobility? Something has clearly gone wrong.

The old ideas about information being free in the information age ended up screwing over everybody except the owners of the very biggest computers. The biggest computers turned into spying and behavior modification operations, which concentrated wealth and power.

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opportunities for brave, creative individuals. Instead, I have watched each successive generation of young journalists, artists, musicians, photographers, and writers face harsher and harsher odds. The perverse effect of opening up information has been that the status of a young person's parents matters more and more, since it's so hard to make one's way.

Q. Throughout history, technological revolutions have caused unemployment but also brought about new types of jobs to replace the old ones. What's different today?

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This should be great news for the future of employment! Multitudes of people are needed in order for robots to speak, drive cars, or perform operations. The only problem is that as the information age is dawning, the ideology of bright young people and newfangled plutocrats alike holds that information should be free.

Q. Who does own the future? What's up for grabs that will affect our future livelihoods?

A. The answer is indeed up for grabs. If we keep on doing things as we are, the answer is clear: The future will be narrowly owned by the people who run the biggest, best connected computers, which will usually be found in giant, remote cloud computing farms.

The answer I am promoting instead is that the future should be owned broadly by everyone who contributes data to the cloud, as robots and other machines animated by cloud software start to drive our vehicles, care for us when we're sick, mine our natural resources, create the physical objects we use, and so on, as the 21st century progresses.

Right now, most people are only gaining informal benefits from advances in technology, like free internet services, while those who own the biggest computers are concentrating formal benefits to an unsustainable degree.

Q. What is a "Siren Server" and how does it function?

A. I needed a broad name for the gargantuan cloud computer services that are concentrating wealth and influence in our era. They go by so many names! There are national intelligence agencies, the famous Silicon Valley companies with nursery school names, the stealthy high finance schemes, and others.

All these schemes are quite similar. The biggest computers can predictably calculate wealth and clout on a broad, statistical level. For instance, an insurance company might use massive amounts of data to only insure people who are unlikely to get sick. The problem is that the risk and loss that can be avoided by having the biggest computer still exist. Everyone else must pay for the risk and loss that the Siren Server can avoid.

The interesting thing about the original Homeric Sirens was that they didn't actually attack sailors. The fatal peril was that sailors volunteered to grant the sirens control of the interaction. That's what we're all doing with the biggest computing schemes.

Q. As a solution to the economic problems caused by digital networks, you assert that each one of us should

be paid for what we do and share online. How would that work?

A. We've all contributed to the fortunes of big Silicon Valley schemes, big finance schemes, and all manner of other schemes which are driven by computation over a network. But our contributions were deliberately forgotten. This is partly due to the ideology of copying without a trace that my friends and I mistakenly thought would lead to a fairer world, back in the day.

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What is clear is that networks could remember where the value actually came from, which is from a very broad range of people. I sketch a way that universal micropayments might solve the problem, though I am not attempting to present a utopian solution. Instead I hope to deprogram people from the "open" ideal to think about networks more broadly. I am certain that once the conversation escapes the bounds of what has become an orthodoxy, better ideas will come about.

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It's true that the fixes put forward in Who Owns the Future are ambitious, but they are presented within an explicitly modest wrapping. I am hoping to make the world safer for diverse ideas about the future. Our times are terribly conformist. For instance, one is either "red" or "blue," or is accepted by the "open culture" crowd or not. I seek to bust open such orthodoxies by showing that other ideas are possible. So I present an intentionally rough sketch of an alternate future that doesn't match up with any of the present orthodoxies.

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When the music is heard, it's often in the context of automatically generated streams from some cloud service, so the listener doesn't even know it's you. Successful music tends to be quite conformist to some pre-existing category, because that way it fits better into the automatic streaming schemes. I miss competing in the intense NYC music scene. Who keeps you honest when the world is drowning in insincere flattery?

So here I am writing books. Hello book critics!

From Booklist

The author, a computer scientist and digital-media pioneer, describes the negative effects on our economy (such as the recent recession and damaged middle class) by digital networks, defined as not only the Internet and the Web, but also other networks operated by outfits like financial institutions and intelligence agencies where the phenomenon of power and money becomes concentrated around the people who operate the most

central computers in a network, undervaluing everyone else. Information is considered free, for example, free Internet services for consumers and data that financial-services firms collect and use without paying for it. The author’s solution is a future in which people are paid for information gleaned from them if that information turns out to be valuable. Lanier describes a future in which most productivity will be driven by software and software could be the final industrial revolution. This is a challenging book about a future information economy that the author suggests does not need to be dominated by technology. --Mary Whaley

Review

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“Lanier’s career as a computer scientist is entwined in the central economic story of our time, the rapid advance of computation and networking. . . . [Who Owns the Future?] not only makes a convincing diagnosis of a widespread problem, but also answers a need for moonshot thinking.” (The New Republic)

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”Lanier’s book mixes scholarly analysis with a series of intriguing ideas on how to take back control of our virtual identity.” (TechGenMag.com)

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The “brilliant” and “daringly original” (The New York Times) critique of digital networks from the “David Foster Wallace of tech” (London Evening Standard)—asserting that to fix our economy, we must fix our information economy.

Jaron Lanier is the father of virtual reality and one of the world’s most brilliant thinkers. Who Owns the Future? is his visionary reckoning with the most urgent economic and social trend of our age: the poisonous concentration of money and power in our digital networks.

Lanier has predicted how technology will transform our humanity for decades, and his insight has never been more urgently needed. He shows how Siren Servers, which exploit big data and the free sharing of information, led our economy into recession, imperiled personal privacy, and hollowed out the middle class. The networks that define our world—including social media, financial institutions, and intelligence agencies—now threaten to destroy it.

But there is an alternative. In this provocative, poetic, and deeply humane book, Lanier charts a path toward a brighter future: an information economy that rewards ordinary people for what they do and share on the web.

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Most helpful customer reviews

158 of 171 people found the following review helpful.
The internet destroys more jobs than it creates.
By Orin Thomas
If you've read "Race against the machine" and "The lights in the tunnel" you'll be familiar with part of Lanier's thesis, though Lanier also goes further and ties in the demonetization of information in his predictions about the future. There are some quotable lines in the book, one of which stayed with me even though I hadn't thought of it precisely in this way - something like "the internet destroys more jobs that it creates". In a nutshell, by introducing efficiencies, by disrupting existing markets, the internet makes things more efficient so that a greatly reduced number of people can perform the same tasks. What Lanier also highlights is that the "new jobs" that were meant to replace the ones lost to automation aren't appearing. In part because there has also been as strong push to make "information free", so jobs creating that information that "wants to be free" won't put the bread on the table. Lanier suggests that the Internet is shrinking the economy because by making information free, it's taken the value/wealth that once existed in creating that information out of the economy. That the number of jobs that the internet creates is a fraction of the number that it has automated away.

Lanier proposes some solutions to this problem which would involve a seismic shift in the way that current users of the internet consider the cost of information. He suggests that the Internet could create jobs if only the creation and distribution of information could be monetized. He provides some ideas in this direction. He also makes some predictions about what happens if something doesn't change.

I felt that Lanier described the problem well without going into an approach where he over did it. While I agree with the problem and think his predictions make sense, I also suspect that the people who have pushed hard to demonetizes information are about as likely to change their policies as the oil industry is in light of "peak oil". That is that the problem is understood in an academic sense, but they are still making truckloads of cash, so why change the system?

At the moment the received wisdom is that the internet creates jobs and that anyone who disagrees is a luddite. I think books like Lanier's, Race Against the Machine, and Lights in the Tunnel are providing a different interpretation of the future, but one that won't be seen as prescient for a decade or so.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.
A disappointing book
By Yoda
This reviewer purchased this book because of the very interesting and insightful views presented by Mr. Lanier in his previous book, “You are not a Gadget: A Manifesto”. In that book the author did an excellent job at presenting the many negatives of the internet and the “new” high technology economy that, at least initially, so few seemed able to see. An example included the fact that a very large number of musicians and filmmakers would, thanks to rampant illegal copying of intellectual property, no longer be able to make a living in their fields. This reviewer was hoping for similar insights in Mr. Lanier’s new book. Unfortunately the book only did a so and so job at presenting any.

The main theme of the book is that the digital economy will (and already is) economically devastating a large proportion of workforce. It is doing so because the new technologies greatly concentrate economic activity into far few handers. Large high tech companies have far fewer workers than companies with equal capitalizations in the “old” economy. Twitter, for example, is capitalized at about $1 bn yet has only about dozen employees. In the past companies with such large capitalizations (i.e., Kodak), would have in the hundreds if not thousands.

In addition, companies like Twitter, make their profits through the use of information that is provided by users for free on the internet. Hence large profits are made without having to pay anything for their content. This is good for the owners of these companies but not so good for the many providers of information as well as the displaced workers. This obviously has negative connotations for the workforce as a whole. A similarly negative prognosis has been put forth regarding the impact on the labor force, in much greater detail, by authors such as Dr. Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee in their “The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies” and Dr. Tyler Cowen’s “Average is Over: Powering America beyond the Age of Great Stagnation” albeit not for the same reasons as Mr. Lanier put forth.

Unlike these two books, Mr. Lanier presents a solution (in his opinion) that would mitigate (or eliminate – Mr. Lanier does not state explicitly) this problem. His solution is to pay the “owners” of information (i.e. users of internet and providers of information) the value of the information by the businesses that use it (i.e., firms such as Twitter). This would require, first and foremost, the creation of a unique digital identity for every user. This would not be as easy as Mr. Lanier suggests as every business user of information has a vested interest to create its own digital ID for every user of the internet in order to keep other firms from collecting information “owners”. For example, Google would want its own unique ID on each user, Bing its own, etc.

After this unique ID is created, it can then serve as a basis for paying the “owners” for the use of the information. There are a number of problems with this also, however. One is how is the value going to be determined? In face to face market transactions economic actors may bargain for the right price or accept or reject a transaction that is set at a fixed price. How would prices be set for using the use of information obtained by companies on “users” of the internet, for example? Companies that collect such information have an incentive to claim that the value is zero or, at the very least, much less than it really is. A serious problem, to say the least. Mr. Lanier, however, disagrees. He believes that a Rousseau-like contract will develop between the owners and users of this information that will, somehow and magically, remove this

dilemma. The author writes (p 288 of hardcopy):

“Over time, people will hopefully adjust to the idea that you have to pay other as you would like to be paid. The more interests a person perceived in common with others, even when commonalities are best illuminated by theatrical effects, the more likely the market will function well, and grow. The psychology of a social contract will eventually take hold”.

A third problem with Mr. Lanier’s framework is that the value of each of these individual transactions (the collection by, say, Bing of information on what type of shoe an individual has last looked for on the internet) is tiny, if anything. Hence transaction costs associated with making payments may equal or exceed the actual value of that information.

The forth, and most serious problem, involves what the actual value of all this information is to “owners”. Mr. Lanier’s framework works on the assumption that it will provide the “owners” with a livelihood. There is no reason to believe, though, that this could be the case. This can even be the case if transaction costs are an asymptotic zero and there is no shirking with respect to payment on the part of businesses using this information.

Due to all of these problems it seems highly unlikely that Mr. Lanier’s framework will provide a living to a large proportion of the workforce (or any for that matter). More realistic alternatives would involve a massive expansion of the welfare state. Funds will have to be distributed, to a large degree, from the top “winners” to the bulk of society (the “losers”). This will not be a favorable solution, especially from the perspective of those at the top. Considering the fact that the alternative is the collapse of the middle class and Democracy (few could rationally put forth the view that a Democracy can function in the absence of a large middle class) and its replacement with some non-Democratic form of government (i.e., along the lines of Lee’s Singapore or Pinochet’s Chile) what other choice can there be? Unfortunately Mr. Lanier ignores this (much more realistic) set of alternative.

The author also make a number of other interesting points in his book. For example, if users of personal information had to pay for it, it would make cyberspying too costly. The spies would have to pay for each piece of info and since there is so much it would be problematic to engage in very broad mass spying (as opposed to targeted). It would become economically impossible. Assuming, of course, that a working framework could be established them to pay for it to begin with.

In this reviewer’s opinion the author’s views (and this book) is worth reading but due to the many weaknesses in his views the book itself is worthy of only a three star rating.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.
Concerns and Cautions/Perils and Proposals for Our Networked Information Economic Odyssey
By Fred Cheyunski
When I heard Jaron Lanier speak about his book, I was interested in learning more about his take our networked information economy. So it was good to finally finish the book and understand his view that, as things are currently progressing, what he terms "Siren Servers" (such as Amazon, Google, Facebook) will own the future. That is unless proposals such as his help us move to an alternative future where data ownership and costs are higher and yet there are more of us who have a piece of the action as part of a middle class that can grow and prosper.

Segments that stood out or were most memorable for me included Lanier's description of Siren Server effects, his map out and summaries of nine "dismal humors" of futurism and one hopeful one (based on Ted

Nelson's earlier work on "two-way links"). I also really appreciated the graph (page 209) that visually represents the hypothesis of the book that the degree of democracy/participation will rise as the cost of information increases. Of particular interest to me were his comments on how we could earn and spend as well as barriers and leadership scenarios for transitioning to more humanistic arrangements.

As others have indicated, this book is dense, covers much ground, and it can be challenging for a reader to connect all the various pieces. However there are nuggets at every turn, and hanging in or returning to the text is worth it to get the insights and concerns from this tech insider. While his alternative future may not be "the one," hopefully more will heed his cautions and consider ways to promote middle class growth as the networked information economy continues to advance. Perhaps, like Odysseus, we will be able to overcome the dangerous aspects of the Sirens to further progress in the human journey.

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WHO OWNS THE FUTURE? BY JARON LANIER PDF

Due to this publication Who Owns The Future? By Jaron Lanier is sold by online, it will certainly alleviate you not to print it. you could obtain the soft file of this Who Owns The Future? By Jaron Lanier to conserve in your computer system, gadget, and a lot more tools. It relies on your determination where and also where you will certainly check out Who Owns The Future? By Jaron Lanier One that you need to constantly remember is that reviewing book **Who Owns The Future? By Jaron Lanier** will never finish. You will certainly have going to check out various other e-book after finishing a book, and also it's constantly.

Amazon.com Review
An Amazon Best Book of the Month, May 2013: Jaron Lanier's last book, You Are Not a Gadget, was an influential criticism of Web 2.0's crowd-sourced backbone. In Who Owns the Future?, Lanier is interested in how network technologies affect our culture, economy, and collective soul. Lanier is talking about pretty heady stuff--the monopolistic power of big tech companies (dubbed "Siren Servers"), the flattening of the middle class, the obscuring of humanity--but he has a gift for explaining sophisticated concepts with clarity. In fact, what separates Lanier from a lot of techno-futurists is his emphasis on the maintaining humanism and accessibility in technology. In the most ambitious part of the book, Lanier expresses what he believes to be the ideal version of the networked future--one that is built on two-way connections instead of one-way relationships, allowing content, media, and other innovations to be more easily attributed (including a system of micro-payments that lead back to its creator). Is the two-way networked vision of the internet proposed in Who Owns the Future quixotic? Even Lanier seems unsure, but his goal here is to establish a foundation for which we should strive. At one point, Lanier jokingly asks sci-fi author William Gibson to write something that doesn't depict technology as so menacing. Gibson replies, "Jaron, I tried. But it's coming out dark." Lanier is able to conjure a future that's much brighter, and hopefully in his imagination, we are moving closer to that. --Kevin Nguyen

Q&A with Jaron Lanier

Q. Years ago, in the early days of networking, you and your friends asserted that information should be free. What made you change your tune?

A. In the big picture, a great new technology that makes the world more efficient should result in waves of new opportunity. That’s what happened with, say, electricity, telephones, cars, plumbing, fertilizers, vaccinations, and many other examples. Why on earth have the early years of the network revolution been associated with recessions, austerity, jobless recoveries, and loss of social mobility? Something has clearly gone wrong.

The old ideas about information being free in the information age ended up screwing over everybody except the owners of the very biggest computers. The biggest computers turned into spying and behavior modification operations, which concentrated wealth and power.

Sharing information freely, without traditional rewards like royalties or paychecks, was supposed to create opportunities for brave, creative individuals. Instead, I have watched each successive generation of young journalists, artists, musicians, photographers, and writers face harsher and harsher odds. The perverse effect of opening up information has been that the status of a young person’s parents matters more and more, since it’s so hard to make one’s way.

Q. Throughout history, technological revolutions have caused unemployment but also brought about new types of jobs to replace the old ones. What's different today?

A. Cars can now drive themselves, and cloud services can translate passages between languages well enough to be of practical use. But the role of people in these technologies turned out to be a surprise.

Back in the 1950s, the fantasy in the computer science world was that smart scientists would achieve machine intelligence and profound levels of automation, but that never worked. Instead, vast amounts of "big data" gathered from real people is rehashed to create automation. There are many, many real people behind the curtain.

This should be great news for the future of employment! Multitudes of people are needed in order for robots to speak, drive cars, or perform operations. The only problem is that as the information age is dawning, the ideology of bright young people and newfangled plutocrats alike holds that information should be free.

Q. Who does own the future? What's up for grabs that will affect our future livelihoods?

A. The answer is indeed up for grabs. If we keep on doing things as we are, the answer is clear: The future will be narrowly owned by the people who run the biggest, best connected computers, which will usually be found in giant, remote cloud computing farms.

The answer I am promoting instead is that the future should be owned broadly by everyone who contributes data to the cloud, as robots and other machines animated by cloud software start to drive our vehicles, care for us when we're sick, mine our natural resources, create the physical objects we use, and so on, as the 21st century progresses.

Right now, most people are only gaining informal benefits from advances in technology, like free internet services, while those who own the biggest computers are concentrating formal benefits to an unsustainable degree.

Q. What is a "Siren Server" and how does it function?

A. I needed a broad name for the gargantuan cloud computer services that are concentrating wealth and influence in our era. They go by so many names! There are national intelligence agencies, the famous Silicon Valley companies with nursery school names, the stealthy high finance schemes, and others.

All these schemes are quite similar. The biggest computers can predictably calculate wealth and clout on a broad, statistical level. For instance, an insurance company might use massive amounts of data to only insure people who are unlikely to get sick. The problem is that the risk and loss that can be avoided by having the biggest computer still exist. Everyone else must pay for the risk and loss that the Siren Server can avoid.

The interesting thing about the original Homeric Sirens was that they didn't actually attack sailors. The fatal peril was that sailors volunteered to grant the sirens control of the interaction. That's what we're all doing with the biggest computing schemes.

Q. As a solution to the economic problems caused by digital networks, you assert that each one of us should be paid for what we do and share online. How would that work?

A. We've all contributed to the fortunes of big Silicon Valley schemes, big finance schemes, and all manner of other schemes which are driven by computation over a network. But our contributions were deliberately forgotten. This is partly due to the ideology of copying without a trace that my friends and I mistakenly

thought would lead to a fairer world, back in the day.

The error we made was simple: Not all computers are created equal.

What is clear is that networks could remember where the value actually came from, which is from a very broad range of people. I sketch a way that universal micropayments might solve the problem, though I am not attempting to present a utopian solution. Instead I hope to deprogram people from the “open” ideal to think about networks more broadly. I am certain that once the conversation escapes the bounds of what has become an orthodoxy, better ideas will come about.

Q. Who Owns the Future seems like two books in one. Does it seem that way to you?

A. If all I wanted was sympathy and popularity, I am sure that a critique by itself—without a proposal for a solution—would have been more effective.

It’s true that the fixes put forward in Who Owns the Future are ambitious, but they are presented within an explicitly modest wrapping. I am hoping to make the world safer for diverse ideas about the future. Our times are terribly conformist. For instance, one is either “red” or “blue,” or is accepted by the “open culture” crowd or not. I seek to bust open such orthodoxies by showing that other ideas are possible. So I present an intentionally rough sketch of an alternate future that doesn’t match up with any of the present orthodoxies.

A reality-based, compassionate world is one in which criticism is okay. I dish it out, but I also lay my tender neck out before you.

Q. You’re a musician in addition to being a computer scientist. What insight has that given you?

A. In the 1990s I was signed to a big label, but as a minor artist. I had to compete in an esoteric niche market, as an experimental classical/jazz high prestige sort of artist. That world was highly competitive and professional, and inspired an intense level of effort from me.

I assumed that losing the moneyed side of the recording business would not make all that much of a difference, but I was wrong. I no longer bother to release music. The reason is that it now feels like a vanity market. Self-promotion has become the primary activity of many of my musician friends. Yuk.

When the music is heard, it’s often in the context of automatically generated streams from some cloud service, so the listener doesn’t even know it’s you. Successful music tends to be quite conformist to some pre-existing category, because that way it fits better into the automatic streaming schemes. I miss competing in the intense NYC music scene. Who keeps you honest when the world is drowning in insincere flattery?

So here I am writing books. Hello book critics!

From Booklist

The author, a computer scientist and digital-media pioneer, describes the negative effects on our economy (such as the recent recession and damaged middle class) by digital networks, defined as not only the Internet and the Web, but also other networks operated by outfits like financial institutions and intelligence agencies where the phenomenon of power and money becomes concentrated around the people who operate the most central computers in a network, undervaluing everyone else. Information is considered free, for example, free Internet services for consumers and data that financial-services firms collect and use without paying for it. The author’s solution is a future in which people are paid for information gleaned from them if that information turns out to be valuable. Lanier describes a future in which most productivity will be driven by

software and software could be the final industrial revolution. This is a challenging book about a future information economy that the author suggests does not need to be dominated by technology. --Mary Whaley

Review
“The most important book I read [this year] . . . Provocative, unconventional ideas for ensuring that the inevitable dominance of software in every corner of society will be healthy instead of harmful.” (Joe Nocera, The New York Times)

“Daringly original . . . Lanier’s sharp, accessible style and opinions make Who Owns the Future? terrifically inviting.” (Janet Maslin The New York Times)

“Lanier’s career as a computer scientist is entwined in the central economic story of our time, the rapid advance of computation and networking. . . . [Who Owns the Future?] not only makes a convincing diagnosis of a widespread problem, but also answers a need for moonshot thinking.” (The New Republic)

"Lanier has a mind as boundless as the internet . . . [He is] the David Foster Wallace of tech." (London Evening Standard)

“Lanier has a poet’s sensibility and his book reads like a hallucinogenic reverie, full of entertaining haiku-like observations and digressions.” (Financial Times)

"Everyone complains about the Internet, but no one does anything about it . . . except for Jaron Lanier." (Neal Stephenson bestselling author of Reamde and Cryptonomicon)

"Who Owns the Future? explains what’s wrong with our digital economy, and tells us how to fix it. Listen up!” (George Dyson bestselling author of Turing's Cathedral)

"Who Owns the Future? is a deeply original and sometimes startling read. Lanier does not simply question the dominant narrative of our times, but picks it up by the neck and shakes it. A refreshing and important book that will make you see the world differently." (Tim Wu author of The Master Switch)

“This book is rare. It looks at technology with an insider’s knowledge, wisdom, and deep caring about human beings. It’s badly needed.” (W. Brian Arthur economist and author of The Nature of Technology)

"One of the triumphs of Lanier's intelligent and subtle book is its inspiring portrait of the kind of people that a democratic information economy would produce. His vision implies that if we are allowed to lead absorbing, properly remunerated lives, we will likewise outgrow our addiction to consumerism and technology." (The Guardian)

"This ambitious book is about how to help ordinary people survive and prosper at a time when advances in computer technology make it increasingly difficult for some people to find a job." (USA Today)

"A smart, accessible book that takes a critical look at our online state of affairs and finds it out of balance." (Carolyn Kellogg, The Los Angeles Times)

"One of the best skeptical books about the online world." (Salon)

“Brilliant.” (Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times)

”Lanier’s book mixes scholarly analysis with a series of intriguing ideas on how to take back control of our virtual identity.” (TechGenMag.com)

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