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The Dark Side of Media and Technology: A 21st Century Guide to Media and Technological Literacy [Book Review]

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The twenty-first century can be described as a challenging time to become a media and technologically literate. Insufficient information has the effect of ruining lives, and we all have a responsibility to fight it where we see it. Research has mostly concentrated on the "bright side" of media and technology, aiming to understand and support in leveraging the multiple possibilities afforded of its usage. As the main channel of communication for a world is an inseparable duo of media and technology, it also has its dark side. The current worldwide misinformation and surrounding "information glut" (Postman, 1995), and waves of cyberbullying, addictive use, trolling, online witch hunts, fake news, and privacy abuse demonstrated the need for a new approach to this problem.

In *The Dark Side of Media and Technology: A 21st Century Guide To Media and Technological Literacy*, editor Edward Downs bring together contributors to explore the dark side that exists in media and technology and sheds some light on the dimmer matters of human interaction with media and technology. The forty-six authors develop an understanding of four primary outcomes of the human relationship to media and technology in 25 interesting, highly readable chapters. Each chapter introduces the reader with a meticulously developed theoretical background and latest research findings, presented by a remarkable group of multi-disciplinary experts and researchers. Their work is the proof of the correctness of sentence, that "media and technology can do both great and

horrible things for people" (p. 2).

Generally, the book opens exciting avenues for further research. It can be read as a call for further development of the 'dark side of technology and media', the concept recently introduced by the Edward Downs and Aaron R. Boyson (p. 8). The book is organized into divisions relating to media and technology and presents various pitfalls and landmines in the media ecosystem.

The first chapter of the author's work introduces readers to the subject of the dark side of the use of digital media and technology. Then, from Chapters Two to Five, the reader gets acquainted with the darkness lurking in the mass media domain. From propaganda to fake news, the recipient of the text is introduced to the theory surrounding the issue, together with examples, clearly illustrating the threats discussed. The seventh chapter, written by Meghan S. Sanders and Stephannie L. Whitenack, examines the interesting topic of the influence of the media on shaping and consolidating stereotypes in public opinion.

Chapter Eight is dedicated to the distortion of the media's perception of the body and body shaming, which translates into an increase in the society's problems related to eating disorders, an increase in the number of unusually interfering plastic surgeries to strive for a perfect appearance obtained employing illusory filters. Chapter Nine, authored by Mary Beth Oliver and Arienne Ferchaud, discusses the phenomenon of immorality in the media, and Chapter Ten presents ways of solving copycat murders in the context of mass shootings.

Chapters Eleven to Fifteen refer to the digital environment and the associated threats. Jesse Fox, Guanjin Zhang and Jessica Frampton discuss the influence of social media on the development of mental disorders in their users. The next chapter explains the dangers of engaging in online dating. Similarly, the thirteenth chapter develops the issue of sexting and the negative impact of sharing nudity pictures without the knowledge of the people involved. The perils and pitfalls of online manipulation by sectarians, predators, and online haters are discussed in Chapter Fourteen, written by Loreen N. Olson and Roy Schwartzman. Threats in the digital environment with ways to counteract them are summarized in Chapter Fifteen with a detailed discussion of the literature on cyberbullying.

Human relationships with new technologies and the dangers associated with them are discussed in the following chapters. Problems connected to the unpredicted consequences of ignoring the terms of service and privacy policies of social media and other

technologies are presented in Chapter Sixteen. The following chapters are assigned to the threat of excessive access to privacy for technologies using the Internet of Things (IoT). The next chapter discusses the risks associated with a very popular form of entertainment, namely video and computer games. The authors of this section, T. Franklin Waddell and James D. Ivory took the increase in tension, aggression, and toxic behavior of players to a scientific workshop. This topic of addiction to online games is developed in the next chapter. Compulsive use of mobile technologies, distraction, and other dark sides are discussed in Chapter Twenty.

Chapters Twenty-One to Twenty-Five are intended to present futuristic technologies and the threats they pose. Digital safety, augmented reality, and darkness associated with a lack of digital hygiene, anti-social interactions with social robots and the dangers associated with autonomous machines are not only reliably developed by the authors from a theoretical point of view, but also presented to the reader in a pictorial way. The last chapter of this book is one of the best summaries in scientific literature I have ever read. The author of the chapter shows the balance between the light and dark sides of media and technology and explains that these threats are not a product of imagination, but really happen and each of us is exposed to them. He raises the importance of the continuous development of digital competence, which is necessary in order not only not to be deceived and harmed online but also to protect ourselves and our loved ones from the dangers. At the same time, the author stresses that all the digital skills we acquire should be seen not as a set of skills, but as a system of values allowing us to participate in the digital world while preserving and nurturing humanity (p. 296).

Notably, the book not only allows us to overcome the pitfalls of the rational expectations hypothesis, but also the sociological fixation on shared beliefs as a pre-condition for action. The contributions clearly show that assumptions about the dark sides visible in media and technology balance with four main points of light that are the keys to taking ownership of a media-technology world. This book establishes a starting point for every modern user of media and technology. It shows that if we learn to use technology responsibly and ethically, together we will create a safe digital environment for us and for future generations.

Overall, *The Dark Side of Media and Technology: A 21st Century Guide To Media and Technological Literacy* is a thought-provoking and analytically helpful book. It presents some established assumptions in informatology, communication, and media studies.

It also proposes directions for further research into the dark side of media and technology development and usage. Just as we read on the last page of the book, do not blindly believe everything we read on the Internet, because it can be disastrous for us.

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