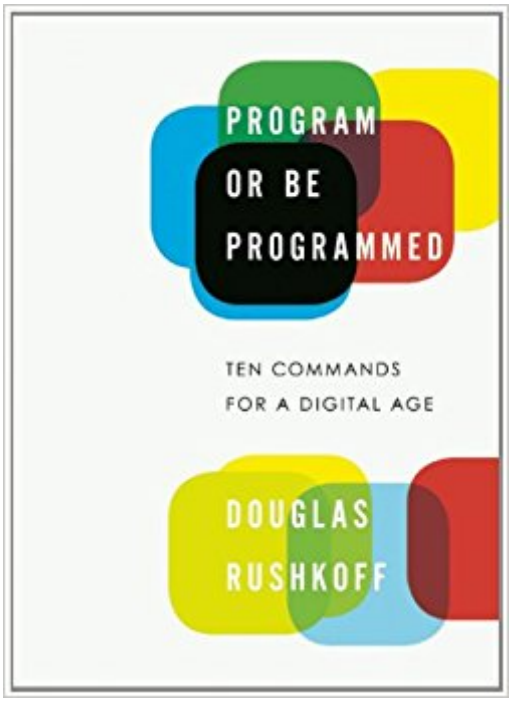
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Program Or Be Programmed: Ten Commands For A Digital Age



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Synopsis

The debate over whether the Net is good or bad for us fills the airwaves and the blogosphere. But for all the heat of claim and counter-claim, the argument is essentially beside the point: ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s here; itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s everywhere. The real question is, do we direct technology, or do we let ourselves be directed by it and those who have mastered it? “Choose the former,Ã¢â ¬Â• writes Rushkoff, “and you gain access to the control panel of civilization. Choose the latter, and it could be the last real choice you get to make.Ã¢â ¬Â•In ten chapters, composed of ten “commandsÃ¢â ¬Â• accompanied by original illustrations from comic artist Leland Purvis, Rushkoff provides cyber enthusiasts and technophobes alike with the guidelines to navigate this new universe.In this spirited, accessible poetics of new media, Rushkoff picks up where Marshall McLuhan left off, helping readers come to recognize programming as the new literacy of the digital age––and as a template through which to see beyond social conventions and power structures that have vexed us for centuries. This is a friendly little book with a big and actionable message.

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Customer Reviews

Praise for Program or Be Programmed"Now that much of what Rushkoff has predicted over the years has come to pass, he is uniquely qualified to write what may be one of the most important and instructive books of our times: Program or be Programmed: Ten Commands for a Digital Age. In it,

he outlines ten different ideas that information technology is biased towards; biases that can cause discord in our lives. However, rather than predicting that the sky is falling, Rushkoff gives practical and actionable advice on how to turn those biases into advantages." —Wired"Lucid and consequential . . . a subtle and substantiated call for (missing) humanity in networked daily life." —Neural.it“Thinking twice about our use of digital media, what our practices are doing to us, and what we are doing to each other, is one of the most important priorities people have today—and Douglas Rushkoff gives us great guidelines for doing that thinking. Read this before and after you Tweet, Facebook, email or YouTube.Ã¢â ¬Â• —Howard Rheingold“Douglas Rushkoff is one of the great thinkers––and writers––of our time.Ã¢â ¬Â• —Timothy Leary“Rushkoff is damn smart. As someone who understood the digital revolution faster and better than almost anyone, he shows how the internet is a social transformer that should change the way your business culture operates.Ã¢â ¬Â• —Walter Isaacson“WhatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s the difference between being able to operate in the web, and being able to thrive there? The difference is in being able to understand the how and why of this new world. In ten chapters or commands, Douglas Rushkoff lays out how to live in this new world. Some of this advice will seem straightforward, some of it will need explanation, and some of it will seem more than a little counterintuitive. But all of it is delivered with verve and insight that makes you rethink your interactions on the web. Are you driving your life here, or only a passenger? If you want to get your hands on the wheel, this book is a good place to start.Ã¢â ¬Â• —Daily Kos“Rushkoff presents ten succinct commands for choosing our own destiny in the online era, ranging from Do Not Be Always On to Do Not Sell Your Friends. In the process, he presents a way we can actively leverage these technologies to build a more shareable world similar to the one we envision in our report The New Sharing Economy, as opposed to allowing our tools and those who create them to define the social constructs of the current era.Ã¢â ¬Â• —Shareable.net

World-renowned media theorist and counterculture figure Douglas Rushkoff is the originator of ideas such as Ã¢â ¬Å“viral media,Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“social currencyÃ¢â ¬Â• and Ã¢â ¬Å“screenagers.Ã¢â ¬Â• He has been at the forefront of digital society from its beginning, correctly predicting the rise of the net, the dotcom boom and bust, as well as today’s financial crisis. He is a familiar voice on NPR, face on PBS, and writer in publications from Discover Magazine to the New York Times. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The title suggests that the central idea is whether we master technology or let it control us and I was prepared for a bit of a rant. What Rushkoff has done, however, is place digital technology in its appropriate place in the evolution of civilization. By looking at how societies responded to the introduction of the alphabet, the printing press, and now digital media, he frames the importance of not being so distracted by our bright shiny gadgets that we ignore their inherent biases. His focus on the interactive, collaborative nature of digital technology shows both its promise and its shortcomings. I was quite chagrined when he took my favorite argument against coding for all (I can drive a car without knowing how to build one), and pointed out that by approaching cars solely as consumers, we missed the biases that changed not only how we get from place to place, but literally changed our national landscape, took us into wars, and endangered our planet. Oh, right. In the end, Rushkoff is not so much advocating "coding for all." as he is suggesting that we need to be educated about the inherent biases in our technology and develop a societal plan for dealing with them. This is a definition of digital literacy I can embrace wholeheartedly.

Worried about the effect that ever expanding information technologies are having on global culture, our personal lives and how we interact with one another? Well, Douglas Rushkoff is (and if you're not, you either haven't been paying attention or you're too young to remember the pre-internet world). "Program or Be Programmed" offers some timely reflections on the state of what's happening to us now. Maybe future readers will look back and laugh...or maybe they'll look back and say at least someone saw it coming.Some of Rushkoff's observations seem spot-on, while others are a bit more questionable. For example, he laments the lack of availability of computer programming classes at the high school level fearing that students are learning only how to operate the software without ever understanding the methods of its creation. That strikes me as an odd concern. One could just as easily argue that programmers are at a fundamental disadvantage lacking an understanding of the electrical engineering which makes modern microprocessors possible. That logic could be extended backward ad infinitum. (Do I need to understand Boolean logic in order to, say, build a website?)His more astute observations deal with things like the often cited shortening of attention spans, the valuation of the recent over the relevant, the stress caused by the constant onslaught of new data (about which he says "for the first time, regular people are beginning to shows signs of stress and mental fatigue once exclusive to air traffic controllers and 911 operators"), and the separation of people from their physical surroundings ("our digital behaviors closely mirror those of Asperger's sufferers; low pick up on social cues and facial expressions, apparent lack of empathy, and the inability to make facial contact").One of the more

disturbing behaviors that omnipresent internet-enabled digital devices spawn is the attitude that a person’s online representation of themselves (a sort of simulation of one’s self) is more important than actually experiencing that life. This is a phenomenon in which it’s more important to one’s self valuation to be seen as being at all the right events, socializing with all of the right people having a better time than one’s audience than it is to actually enjoy the event being experienced. We’re all celebrities now (at least within our circle of digital followers).He chronicles another familiar modern phenomenon: the mashup. Creative works that once stood as isolated and indivisible are now subject to infinite duplication, disassembly, rearrangement and publication as "new" works. Are they really new? If I rearrange the songs on your album and lay some new beats over top of it, am I an artist? Good question. It’s something that the world’s filmmakers will have to struggle with as their audience slices up their movie oeuvre and inserts characters from the film into a movie of their own making.All is not lost, however. He highlights a positive trend in online communication: surfacing the truth. When statements are posted and circulated online which are inaccurate or flat out false, someone somewhere is going to see it and call out that falsehood. He says that "the way to flourish in a mediaspace biased toward nonfiction is to tell the truth." He quickly adds a caveat to that saying that "this means having a truth to tell."

This is a really good quick and must read for not only the average person, but even professional that work actively in technology. It is an insightful book, that at its heart, calls to the importance of members in an economy having mastery of fundamental skills at the heart of any industry - in this case information technology. Rushkoff brings to light how the advantages the internet and data technologies have brought and the inherent bias which can alter our behaviour result in reduction to quality of life if we aren’t conscious of them.I am certainly guilty of a number of behaviours Rushkoff describes, and while I can’t rid myself of them completely, I am definitely more aware of them and try to keep them at a minimum and try to remove some of my technology tethers when I go on an extended vacation. While you may disagree with some of the points and concur with others, this book is a very quick exploration into the ’connected’ psyche of our society.

often people point out that technology is growing at a faster rate than man’s ability to make sense and utilizes it. Many, myself included, shrug off the newest bit of electrical wizardry noting how it is in essence dumbing ourself down. Others give reference to this heightened level of gadgetry. What Rushkoff manages to to better than anyone else since Mcluhan is point out that that all of this should not be praised or dammed but understood. That all technologies were design for a utilitarian

task and we should know what these tasks were instead of mindlessly using technology for its own sake. For instance, people use social media sites such as facebook (although this might be replaced by a hipper site at anytime) to connect to people. Of course the site is only interested in all of this interaction in so far it can find a way to monetize this information. However what is interesting is, the internet itself was not design to lubricate business but was created by the military to pass information around in without any central hub. So basically marketers are spending millions on social media only to find out their is a bias that is working against them. This is one example out of many that illustrates Rushkoffs line of reasoning. He ends the book by urging people to learn a thing or two about programing making the case that in every symbiotic relationship their is a mover and a moved, and if we do not now how to change and augment computers we end up having to adapt to them. We end up being harmed by what should be a boon to us, which I think accounts for the standoffish attitude mentioned above toward computers and their ilk. Now off to learn binary.

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