Foreword

Matthew Crick is one of those rare professors who is as happy to be creating his own vision on film as he is animatedly teaching television production theory and practice in a classroom or studio. A rare breed indeed, a hands-on and passionate practitioner who also understands that a rich, deep knowledge of television production and YouTube only further informs his own craft, and that of his students. Crick excites his students with captivating YouTube content, and challenges them to identify the implications of the immersive and interactive YouTube experience. After all, even a passive YouTuber is not only a participant in the YouTube phenomenon, but is perhaps playing an unwitting part in a new surveillance culture.

There is perhaps also duality in this book’s methodology, having been written from the perspective of someone who has an excellent track record of producing emotionally compelling on-screen storytelling, but also is thoughtful about how such content could be delivered to and received by a larger audience. Crick finds the balance between offering relevant and engaging examples of YouTube content with seeking understanding of the significance and cultural implications of such material. *Power, Surveillance, and Culture in YouTube’s Digital Sphere* is multi-faceted in its approach to helping us understand how YouTube has thrived in multiple and complex cultural domains.

Such rapid success and widespread mass adoption has resulted in YouTube becoming the preeminent global purveyor and repository of online video content today. The amount of video uploaded to YouTube every day, and stored in seeming perpetuity is simply vast. This book offers a compelling story of the successful development of YouTube from its very first video upload, through important viral events that include both graphically visceral and humorous moments, to serious content such as scholarly lectures, political movements and news stories. YouTube offers entertainment in abundance, as well as self-empowering amateur and professional content. Yet, there is also nonsensical material, often the subject of morning talk shows, that has little redeeming value but simultaneously attracts a large audience. YouTube is the domain of both the amateur and the professional. Through the story of landmark moments in YouTube’s history, Crick delivers an astute exploration of how such developments altered and ultimately made YouTube into the platform it is today, a source of seemingly bottomless information and content.

Crick, as this book will attest, understands that the history of YouTube’s development is complex. The messy rise and steady mass adoption of the internet has seen websites and digital ideas and technologies come and go. Yet the enduring story of YouTube, and Google’s role in it, is surely remarkable as its own progress and expansion in the larger culture of mainstay online entities has been inextricably entwined with the worldwide expansion and development of the Internet. YouTube’s impact upon society is rightfully questioned by Crick, who examines its power upon society and questions the potential surveillance
aspects of the website and YouTubers’ themselves. This approach is most welcome in a time that finds the lines between private and public behaviors and creative expression increasingly blurred.

This book is a valuable insight into the development and continuing influence of YouTube upon society as a whole, and a substantive effort toward filling the deficiency of scholarly research on YouTube in this particular area. Crick offers us fresh perspectives, including his own original research, with which to evaluate the impact that YouTube continues to have on the billions of YouTubers around the world. Crick’s text is the best explanation yet of how YouTube has historically developed to become, for better or for worse, a prime influencer of popular culture today.

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