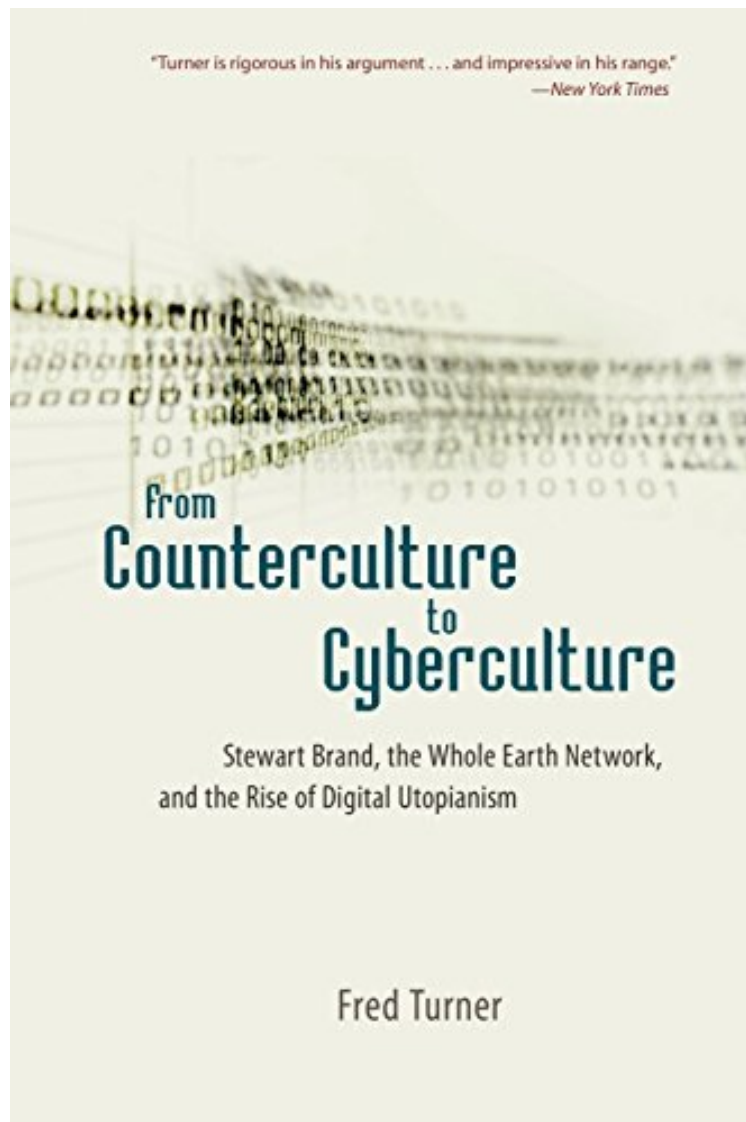


[Free pdf] From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism

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Fred Turner

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Fred Turner : From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Insight into America's cultural transformation By Malvin "From

Counterculture to Cyberculture" by Fred Turner offers a groundbreaking work that definitively traces the rise of digital utopianism to the ideals of the 1960s counterculture. Mr. Turner supports his fascinating narrative with original research and provides many pages of thoughtful analysis. This extraordinary book will no doubt be valued by researchers and interested readers who want to gain deep insight into some of the most interesting aspects of America's cultural transformation during the second half of the twentieth century. Mr. Turner contends that the U.S. scientific/military/academic complex of the 1940s-1960s fostered radically new, collaborative work structures characterized by collegiality and the free sharing of information. While the New Left was repelled by this system and what it regarded to be its instruments of empire, Mr. Turner demonstrates that Cold War technology held great appeal to many of the New Communards of the 1960s, who had withdrawn from the political in order to develop consciousness within music, drugs and alternative living arrangements. To key persons within the New Communard movement, it was felt that technology could play a key role in the task of empowering individuals to transform themselves and their world. In particular, Mr. Turner focuses on the remarkable career of Stewart Brand to tell his story. Mr. Turner discusses how Brand personified the anxieties and aspirations of his generation but importantly, recognized the value of collaboration as a key life strategy and aimed to repurpose technology for the benefit of society. Mr. Turner follows Brand through the various phases of his life, including stints as a member of the LSD-dropping Merry Pranksters, an entrepreneur who published the Whole Earth Catalog, independent writer, organizer of computer conferences, developer of the WELL bulletin board/email system, and tech industry consultant to demonstrate how the personal and professional networks that Brand had a part in building have profoundly impacted our attitudes and perceptions about computing technology. Specifically, Mr. Turner argues that the notion of personal computing as a tool for achieving liberation and the Internet as a platform for constructing egalitarian communities were rooted in the countercultural values that Brand, and others within his circle, embraced. Mr. Turner goes on to discuss how the so-called New Economy of the 1990s reveled in the libertarian rhetoric that echoed the apolitical logic of the New Communards, who had returned from the failed communes of the 1970s to seek redemption within corporate America through the construction of an immaterial economy of seemingly endless possibility. Assessing the limitations of ideology to achieve lasting reform both then and now, Mr. Turner suggests that the cyberculturalist task of building a truly egalitarian society will remain problematic as long as its members remain alienated from the material world. I give this brilliant and thoroughly engrossing work the highest possible rating and recommend it to everyone. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant cultural history based in part on Stewart Brand's personal ...By Roger Brindle Brilliant cultural history based in part on Stewart Brand's personal archives, donated to Stanford where Turner teaches. Stewart edited the Whole Earth Catalog for years. They used early computing equipment, including the first Macs and eventually the catalog and Whole Earth Review changed focus from "back to the land" to the future of computing. From hippieesque communes to what is coming next from the MIT laboratories about the future of computing. Fascinating insights into the background of computer programmers and how they got the deep seated belief that they can engineer the future. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good job on a great topic By Douglas Kamp Every dog has its day, and the past couple weeks for this reader have been Fred Turner's day. Served within the confines of this simple looking book is a compelling account of the activities and ideas surrounding high-culture development and maintenance centered in the San Francisco Bay Area. Fred Turner's rsum as a faculty member at Stanford, Harvard, and MIT, plus his work history as a journalist for eight years in Boston, lend authority and depth to the narrative. On top of that, his writing style will be found engaging and easy to read for those accustomed to scholarly reports. His matter-of-fact treatment of LSD will be especially gratifying for outlanders such as myself--people who by the nature of their individual personal journeys through life have not had much direct exposure to the big-time survival-circus surrounding cutting edge technology, nor to the countercultural history surrounding Stewart Brand and his disparate networks of fellow adventurers. This book has been a welcome step in the direction of connecting with people I have learned to admire. So buy it and get ready for a great mix of cybernetics, systems theory, WWII weapons labs, and all the rest. You won't believe the stuff this guy has dug up.

In the early 1960s, computers haunted the American popular imagination. Bleak tools of the cold war, they embodied the rigid organization and mechanical conformity that made the military-industrial complex possible. But by the 1990s and the dawn of the Internet computers started to represent a very different kind of world: a collaborative and digital utopia modeled on the communal ideals of the hippies who so vehemently rebelled against the cold war establishment in the first place. From Counterculture to Cyberculture is the first book to explore this extraordinary and ironic transformation. Fred Turner here traces the previously untold story of a highly influential group of San Francisco Bay area entrepreneurs: Stewart Brand and the Whole Earth network. Between 1968 and 1998, via such familiar venues as the National Book Award winning Whole Earth Catalog, the computer conferencing system known as WELL, and, ultimately, the launch of the wildly successful Wired magazine, Brand and his colleagues brokered a long-running collaboration between San Francisco flower power and the emerging technological hub of Silicon Valley. Thanks to their vision, counterculturalists and technologists alike joined together to reimagine computers as tools for personal liberation, the building of virtual and decidedly alternative communities, and the exploration of bold

new social frontiers. Shedding new light on how our networked culture came to be, this fascinating book reminds us that the distance between the Grateful Dead and Google, between Ken Kesey and the computer itself, is not as great as we might think.

From Publishers Weekly On first glance, back-to-the-land hippies and dot-com entrepreneurs might not seem much alike, but it turns out that they have a whole lot in common underneath those scraggly beards and goatees. Drawing a direct line from dog-eared copies of the Whole Earth Catalog to the slickly techno-libertarian Wired magazine, Stanford University communications professor Turner follows countercultural figures like Stewart Brand, who shaped the information revolution, according to their aspirations to break down the boundaries of individual experience and embrace a larger collective consciousness. Less a biography of Brand than of the swirl of relationships surrounding him, the book shows how the ride of the Merry Pranksters and LSD experimentation led to the early online discussion board Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (the WELL), and into the digital utopianism surrounding the hyperlinked World Wide Web. Turner offers a compelling genealogy of both the ideals and the disappointments of our digital world, one that is as important for scholars as it is illuminating for general readers. (Oct.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist *Starred* In this unique, provocative work of cultural history, Turner teases apart the visions, myths, and rhetoric that have swept us into cyberspace. This concentration on the ethos of our digital enthrallment rather than on technology revolves around gifted entrepreneur and networker Stewart Brand. Inspired by Buckminster Fuller, Ken Kesey, and the back-to-the-land commune movement, Brand created the Whole Earth Catalog, an innovative interdisciplinary compendium that won the National Book Award in 1971 and, as Turner convincingly argues, generated the paradigm that led to the World Wide Web. Brand then declared that the computer was "the new LSD" and a "tool for transformation," and, as a hippie turned cybermystic turned nimble businessman, he founded Wired magazine and the megaprofitable and conservative Global Business Network. Turner tells many an eye-opening tale and connects many dots in this avidly researched, keenly analyzed, and stunningly ironic chronicle of how counterculture ideals transmuted into corporate strategies. In conclusion, Turner assesses the myriad ways digital utopianism has changed the texture of our lives and incisively exposes the staggering hubris of the digerati and the complex social and environmental consequences of computerization. Donna Seaman Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved. "Brand's trajectory from arty 60s mayhem to the halls of Congress reflects, Turner argues, a realisation that "the natural world and the social world really "were" all one system of information exchange." "Turner convincingly portrays a cadre of journalists who strove to transform the idea of the computer from a threat during the Cold War into a means of achieving personal freedom in an emerging digital utopia." "Chapter by chapter, Fred Turner shows inventively and with a deep knowledge of the whole scene how cold war technology met hippie communalism to produce the "Whole Earth Catalog," WELL, "Wired," and everything that followed. This book is a tour de force of historical digging, sociological analysis, and full understanding." "In Turner's meticulously detailed . . . book, he postulates that Brand was an idealistic (albeit Barnumesque) leader of a merry band of cybernetic pranksters who framed the concept of computers and the Internet with a seemingly nonintuitive twist: These one-time engines of government and big business had transmogrified into a social force associated with egalitarianism, personal empowerment, and the nurturing cocoon of community." "Turner's fascinating "From Counterculture to Cyberculture" gives us a detailed look at one slice through this marvelous story. Unlike many other histories that focus on the technical innovators . . . this account focuses on a key player whose role was making the counterculture-cyberculture connection: Stewart Brand. . . . There are a myriad of fascinating little historical details that [Turner] dug up that will surprise and enlighten even the key players in the drama." "With its countercurrents and nuances, [the book] recalls works of the highest standard that also address technology's interactions with national culture: David E. Nye's "American Technological Sublime" (1994) comes to mind, as does Norman Mailer's "Of a Fire on the Moon" (1971). . . . One of the many strengths . . . is that [the book] articulates the sociological forces that created this revolution in our time. Twenty-nine dollars will never buy you more book than this." "Fred Turner's richly detailed history of how the alliance between the counterculture and "digerati" was formed is a fascinating story demonstrating that the computer's metaphoric implications are never simply the result of the technology itself. Engrossing, deeply researched, and rich with implications, "From Counterculture to Cyberculture" is highly recommended for anyone interested in how technological objects attain meaning within social and historical contexts." --N. Katherine Hayles "Turner's enjoyable deep cultural history traces the roots of 1990s techno-utopianism in the acid tests and communes of the 1960s." -- Steven Poole "Guardian" (08/23/2008)