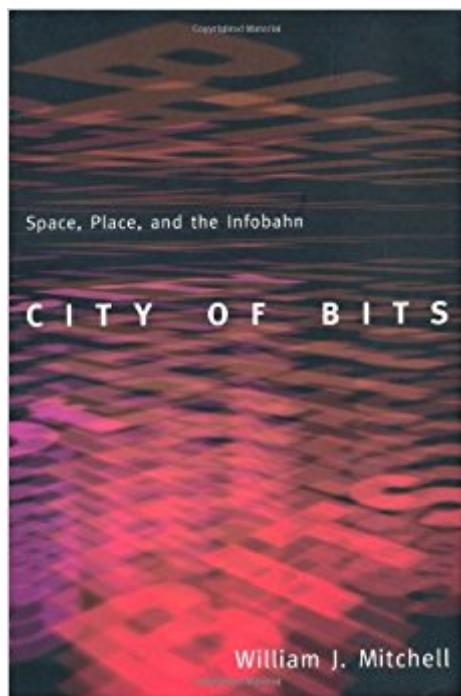The book was found

City Of Bits: Space, Place, And The Infobahn (On Architecture)

Synopsis

Entertaining, concise, and relentlessly probing, City of Bits is a comprehensive introduction to a new type of city, an increasingly important system of virtual spaces interconnected by the information superhighway. William Mitchell makes extensive use of practical examples and illustrations in a technically well-grounded yet accessible examination of architecture and urbanism in the context of the digital telecommunications revolution, the ongoing miniaturization of electronics, the commodification of bits, and the growing domination of software over materialized form.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Cliche alert: just as railroads influenced settlement patterns and economics of the 19th century, and automobiles influenced settlement, commerce, and recreation in the 20th century, computer networks will influence how we live, work, and move (and how and even whether we move) in the 21st century. William Mitchell, from MIT, is one of the first scholars to rigorously examine this modern cliche, and draws heavily on the history of architecture, and urbanism. If you suspect there is truth in these truisms, and want to get beyond facile sloganeering prophesying an infintely ductile future, I highly recommend this book. Mitchell does a very job of explaining not just how things are likely to change, but also of examining historical precedents such as telephony, and to what degree previous prognostications came true.

Digital technology is turning traditional architectural theory and planning upside down, contends

Mitchell, who teaches architecture and media arts at MIT. In this rigorous, highly engaging study, he charts both the architecture of cyberspace and the transformation of buildings and living space in the information age. Examining a wide range of digital phenomena, such as the Internet, encryption tools, the major online services and virtual reality, he explains that the architectural paradigms put forth by civic planners and critics, from Aristotle to Baron Haussmann and Lewis Mumford, do not apply to cyberspace. Mitchell argues that online communities, transcending geographic boundaries and social contexts, offer new ways of thinking about urban design, private and public space, the separation of work and home life and personal identity. In more speculative chapters, he walks us through the changes in civic institutions such as libraries, hospitals, museums, banks and bookstores, changes made possible by computer technology. Complete with architectural blueprints, illustrations of digital gadgetry and an index of related Internet "surf sites," this is a particularly clever and evocative look at the "soft cities" of the 21st century. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Had I come across this book a decade ago I'd have appreciated it more. While it may have been interesting to hear Mitchell prognosticate about the Internet in the mid-1990s, much of this book's content now seems dated. Numerous futuristic scenarios he describes are run-of-the-mill today. Some of what he envisioned is spot on: anyone will be able to telecommute to work, watch CNN and socialize with friends on multiple screens connected to a personal computer; video conferencing will be commonplace; people will be able to get answers to specialized questions in niche online forums. Other prognostications have yet to fully pan out: distance will become irrelevant and the landscapes of cities will be changed by the Internet as much as the automobile changed cities.The best chapters of this book examine architecture and how the design of space in buildings affect people's movement, activities and behavior within that space. Mitchell convincingly argues that design of space can be applied to the virtual world. Still, the technologies and services Mitchell describes as the conduits that would shape the space of the Internet didn't really pan out. I don't think too many people are still going to usenet to find people with common interests, nor are ISPs like eWorld, Compuserv or Prodigy particularly relevant today, as Mitchell seems to have thought they would have been. As someone living in 2009, most of this book comes across as, well, duh, of course. Then again, since I have the benefit of living in the future that Mitchell describes, it's easy for me to say that.

W.J. Mitchell writes a picturesque collection of future scenes reflecting the impact of the digital

telecommunications revolution in "City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn". The book is an intellectual gallery of exhibits arranged among seven chapters, each consisting of a variety of short scenes of plausible architecture and urbanism. I am giving this work four stars for its eloquent writing style, historical research, and some ideas that are slightly rehashed or have a short-range perspective that provide only a limited look at the issues associated with the network technologies. I think that few books, however, could come close to the clarity and coverage of ideas in such a limited number of pages for the general reader. (I should qualify that I am reading this 1996-published book in 2002. Maybe if I read this book in 1996, I would have a very different perspective.)Mitchell deploys a variety of metaphors that provide future scenes that parallel familiar existing scenes. Digital networks, for example, are said to be the post-industrial mines, field, and factories that we now report to. The 'Net, like the railroad which distributed farmers' products to market and consumers, is the medium for transferring raw bit materials from suppliers to manufacturers of information. In the bitsphere, meeting forums are now despatialized, disembodied, and dispersed with virtual addresses, aliases, and chameleon personas. As Mitchell suggests, these "electronic agoras" escape traditional measures of identity. Discrimination and marginalization, moreoever, evolves in new forms with the rise of digital hermits and new information and communication access structures, erected in the form of PKI, Kerberos, firewalls, etc. After laying out the metaphor of the new bitsphere upon the template of traditional urbanism, Mitchell explores the emergent outcomes of the information infrastructure. While distance communication is enhanced by new multi-model designs that increase interactivity well beyond traditional situated roles, for example, the dark side of technological advancement thrives in new resurrected forms such as lurking telepimps, telethugs, cyberpunks, and cybercriminals.Mitchell reconceptualizes social practices from the perspective of a historian and futurist. There is much to be appreciated from the historian perspective, e.g. depiction of the evolution of ATMs, electronic forums, and little brother datasurveillance. The majority of the scenes are based upon existing or nearly existent technologies, suggesting plausible applications within the next five years. (Again the scenes might have been more impressive in 1996.) While some issues are highlighted, such as the advancement of cybercrimes associated with floating signifiers that replace physical cash, the book does not discuss adoption or diffusion of the technologies aside from issues of membership and marginalization. In this way, the book has a deterministic perspective, in which the technology is viewed as an enabler of change and only eludes, to some extent, to the social construction of the technologies. This book is not a collection of information about new technologies. Rather, City of Bits is a presentation of ideas that are compatible with the technological artifacts and their potential

role in urbanism. I recommend the "City of Bits" as a quick ONCE-READ of great writing that may help to unlock the closed mind to the promises and issues of the electronically-mediated future comprised of ubiquitous intelligence- and telecommunication-enabled artifacts.This review refers to the electronic version: [...]

I found William Mitchell's book, "City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn," to be innovative, insightful and thought provoking. (Heh, heh, I was immediately able to relate to Mitchell as he described his daily routine: check email, reply to email, check electronic newspapers, check the weather, repeat during free moments.) His text was a great opportunity to break out of the monotony and "routine-ness" of life and consider what is and what might be.Although I might be using some of the same cyber-services and electronic-tech-toys as William Mitchell, I had never fully considered the impact that some technological advances could have on life. "Cyborg Citizens," the third chapter of Mitchell's text is an excellent example. I appreciated this chapter not just because it was quite thorough, but because of its balanced construction - it discussed both sides of the issue fairly.On one side of the coin, an individual could be extremely stoked with advances in personal, medical technology and what's possible in the future. Mitchell writes, "Anticipate the moment at which all your personal electronic devices can seamlessly be linked in a wireless bodynet that allows them to function as an integrated system and connects them to the worldwide digital network." Consider the possibilities with Mitchell. Medical files and profiles would become immediately available to physicians and medical practitioners. Through advances in telemedicine technology the family physician could make a virtual house visit or a surgeon could perform a complex operation from thousands of miles away. Yet, there is another side to coin. Consider the following. What if the tiny, injectable microchips used to track wildlife and pets were injected into us? Where would the line be drawn? How would this affect our lifestyles and our privacy? True, there are some valid points that could be raised in support of this practice, but would we really want to trackable? Would we really want to be cataloged? Do we really want or even need a device that will let others know where we are and possibly what we are doing at any given moment? Who would have access to this information?Overall, I really enjoyed the "City of Bits." As I mentioned earlier, William Mitchell's text was extremely insightful and thought provoking for me. He does an excellent job of presenting a fairly balanced view. Mitchell sums it up well. "Cyberspace is opening up, and the ruse to claim and settle is on. We are entering an era of electronically extended bodies living at the intersection points of the physical and virtual worlds, of occupation and interaction through telepresence as well as through physical presence."

City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn (On Architecture) The Mortal Instruments, the Complete Collection(City of Bones/ City of Ashes/ City of Glass/ City of Fallen Angels/ City of Lost Souls/ City of Heavenly Fire) inside: Architecture and Design: A guide to the practice of architecture (what they don't teach you in architecture school) Launch Vehicles Pocket Space Guide: Heritage of the Space Race (Pocket Space Guides) What Katie Ate: Recipes and Other Bits and Pieces Introduction to Computing Systems: From Bits and Gates to C and Beyond Kate Spade New York: Things We Love - Twenty Years of Inspiration, Intriguing Bits and Other Curiosities Pretty Good Bits from A Prairie Home Companion and Garrison Keillor: A Specially Priced Introduction to the World of Lake Wobegon Old Jews Telling Jokes: 5,000 Years of Funny Bits and Not-So-Kosher Laughs Making Bits and Pieces Mosaics: Creative Projects for Home & Garden Make Sure You Have a Map: (and Other Bits of Travel Advice I'm Glad I Ignored) Panama & The Canal Zone IN BITS & PIECES Bits of Me Hugh Johnson on Wine: Good Bits from 55 Years of Scribbling Naughty Bits: Erotica with explicit sex guaranteed to stimulate & satisfy! 101 Travel Bits The Alaska Highway Bits of Colorado: Helen Hunt Jackson's Writings for Young Readers The Mental Floss History of the World: An Irreverent Romp Through Civilization's Best Bits Cassandra Clare: The Mortal Instruments Series (5 books): City of Bones; City of Ashes; City of Glass; City of Fallen Angels, City of Lost Souls Sentient City: Ubiquitous Computing, Architecture, and the Future of Urban Space (MIT Press)

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