

TOPICS:

Technology; Security; The Future; Entrepreneurship



Jonathan Zittrain

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BIG IDEAS:

• The Future of the Internet—And How to Stop It

Drawing from his recent book, John Zittrain examines the Internet of today, which has catapulted from backwater to ubiquity—and reveals that it is sputtering precisely because of its runaway success. With the unwitting help of its users, the generative Internet is on a path to a lockdown, ending its cycle of innovation—and facilitating unsettling new kinds of control.

Zittrain believes we don't see clearly what we risk losing. iPods, iPhones, Xboxes, and TiVos represent the first wave of Internet-centered products that can't be easily modified by anyone except their vendors or selected partners. These "tethered appliances" have already been used in remarkable but little-known ways: car GPS systems have been reconfigured at the demand of law enforcement to eavesdrop on the occupants at all times, and digital video recorders have been ordered to self-destruct thanks to a lawsuit against the manufacturer thousands of miles away. New Web 2.0 platforms like Google mash-ups and Facebook are rightly touted—but their applications can be similarly monitored and eliminated from a central source. As tethered appliances and applications eclipse the PC, the very nature of the Internet—its "generativity," or innovative character—is at risk.

The Internet's current trajectory is one of lost opportunity. Its salvation, Zittrain argues, lies in the hands of its millions of users. Drawing on generative technologies like Wikipedia that have so far survived their own successes, this book shows how to develop new technologies and social structures that allow users to work creatively and collaboratively, participate in solutions, and become true "netizens."

• Strategic Points of Control

Brilliant leaders in a number of fields have mastered a chess game their competitors haven't even realized existed. They discover and exploit obscure points of control in a situation, usually points that appear exactly the opposite to everyone else. They use a form of "Janus" thinking—being able to see how something that seems inescapably one way can in fact be flipped in the other direction. Bill Gates, Steve Case, and a host of non-techie types have such strategic grasp. Hollywood, thought to be under attack from all sides, is just beginning to realize how the cards they're holding, turned upside-down, are in fact a very strong hand. Zittrain shows how to identify those basic assumptions that allow others to manipulate our choices—and then how to challenge them.

• National Security

CyberTerrorism and Technology Infrastructure Protection: Should we be afraid? Why is the government so deeply concerned about it, while proposing only a "partnership" to deal with it?

Civil Liberties: Zittrain paints a picture of the surveillance society to come, and highlights the ethical implications.

The Cantonized Internet: Get ready for filters left and right—ideological, mercenary, governmental, and ultimately our own, as the idea of a "generally accessible" web site available on "the" Internet recedes into the past.

BIOGRAPHY

Jonathan Zittrain is Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, where he co-founded its Berkman Center for Internet & Society. Previously he was Professor of Internet Governance and Regulation at Oxford University. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a Forum Fellow of the World Economic Forum, which has named him a Young Global Leader.

His research interests include battles for control of digital property and content, cryptography, electronic privacy, the roles of intermediaries within Internet architecture, and the useful and unobtrusive deployment of technology in education. He has recently co-authored a study of Internet filtering by national governments, and has finished a book about the future of the now-intertwined Internet and PC, called *The Future of the Internet—And How to Stop It*.