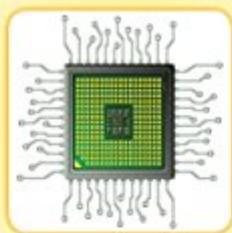


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The Dream Machine: J. C. R. Licklider And The Revolution That Made Computing Personal



THE DREAM MACHINE

J.C.R. LICKLIDER AND THE
REVOLUTION THAT MADE
COMPUTING PERSONAL

M. MITCHELL WALDROP



Synopsis

In 1962, decades before "personal computers" and "Internet" became household words, the revolution that gave rise to both of them was set in motion from a small, nondescript office in the depths of the Pentagon. In an age when the word "computer" still meant a big, ominous mainframe mysteriously processing punch cards, the occupant of that office—an MIT psychologist named J.C.R. Licklider—had somehow seen a future in which computers would become an exciting new medium of expression, a joyful inspiration to creativity, and a gateway to a vast on-line world of information. And now he was determined to use the Pentagon's money to make it all happen. Written with the novelistic flair that made his Complexity "the most exciting intellectual adventure story of the year" (Washington Post), M. Mitchell Waldrop's *The Dream Machine* is the first full-scale portrait of J.C.R. Licklider and how his dream of a "human-computer symbiosis" changed the course of science and culture. But more than that, it is an epic saga of technological advance that spans the history of modern computers from the Second World War to the explosion of creativity at Xerox PARC in the 1970s to the personal computer boom of the 1980s and the Internet boom of the 1990s. Capturing the drama, passion, and excitement of the brilliant men and women who were caught up in one of the great intellectual and technological adventures in human history, *The Dream Machine* has the hallmarks of a classic.

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Customer Reviews

The Dream Machine deserves many more than five stars. Mr. Waldrop provides a valuable synthesis of several important perspectives: (1) The development of personal, interconnected computing from its fundamental roots in academic and corporate scientific thinking, conceptualization, and experimentation; (2) How the vision of one man, Professor J. C. R. Licklider, played an important role in nurturing the development of this form of computing; (3) How creating a computing community that frequently shared ideas in-person and on-line accelerated the development of the technology and the society it served; and (4) How the contributions of the major and minor players fit together to bring us where we are today. Whenever I read a book about the history or current state of computing in the future, The Dream Machine will be valuable for helping me put the observations into context. This is true despite the fact that I have been doing consulting in this industry for almost 30 years, and had early access to many of its important innovations. In fact, if you only read one book about computers in the next two years, The Dream Machine should be that book. As valuable as I found that framing of the development, I was even more impressed with seeing how to foster fundamental human development through this example. Professor Licklider was trained initially in psychology. From that unusual perspective on computers, he quickly perceived what humans can do better than computers (make judgments, fine distinctions, and decide what order to do things in) and what computers can do better than humans (make difficult calculations, remember lots of things at the same time, and rearrange mountains of information into new forms of order).

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