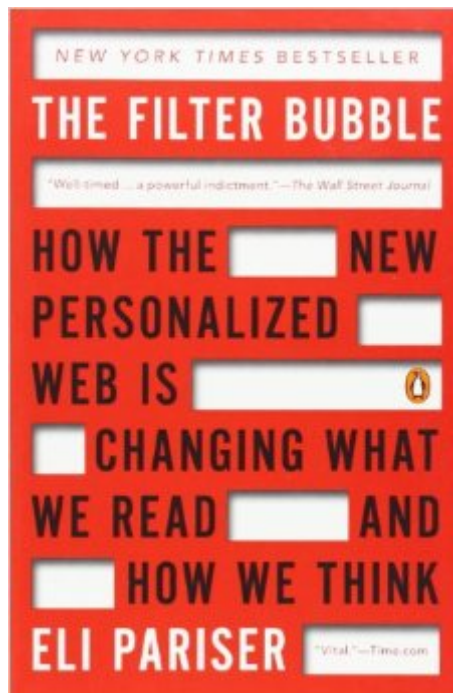


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# The Filter Bubble: How The New Personalized Web Is Changing What We Read And How We Think



## Synopsis

In December 2009, Google began customizing its search results for all users, and we entered a new era of personalization. With little notice or fanfare, our online experience is changing, as the websites we visit are increasingly tailoring themselves to us. In this engaging and visionary book, MoveOn.org board president Eli Pariser lays bare the personalization that is already taking place on every major website, from Facebook to AOL to ABC News. As Pariser reveals, this new trend is nothing short of an invisible revolution in how we consume information, one that will shape how we learn, what we know, and even how our democracy works. • The race to collect as much personal data about us as possible, and to tailor our online experience accordingly, is now the defining battle for today's internet giants like Google, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft. Behind the scenes, a burgeoning industry of data companies is tracking our personal information to sell to advertisers, from our political leanings to the hiking boots we just browsed on Zappos. • As a result, we will increasingly each live in our own, unique information universe—what Pariser calls "the filter bubble." • We will receive mainly news that is pleasant, familiar and confirms our beliefs—and since these filters are invisible, we won't know what is being hidden from us. Our past interests will determine what we are exposed to in the future, leaving less room for the unexpected encounters that spark creativity, innovation and the democratic exchange of ideas. • Drawing on interviews with both cyber-skeptics and cyber-optimists, from the co-founder of OK Cupid, an algorithmically-driven dating website, to one of the chief visionaries of U.S. information warfare, **THE FILTER BUBBLE** tells the story of how the Internet, a medium built around the open flow of ideas, is closing in on itself under the pressure of commerce and monetization. • It peeks behind the curtain at the server farms, algorithms, and geeky entrepreneurs that have given us this new reality, and investigates the consequences of corporate power in the digital age. • **THE FILTER BUBBLE** reveals how personalization could undermine the internet's original purpose as an open platform for the spread of ideas, and leave us all in an isolated, echoing world. But it is not too late to change course. Pariser lays out a new vision for the web, one that embraces the benefits of technology without turning a blind eye to its negative consequences, and will ensure that the Internet lives up to its transformative promise.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Filter Bubble is an outstanding book--a compelling and important argument, delivered persuasively through real reporting, analysis, telling anecdote and hard data. One of Eli Pariser's central points is that personalized internet services--Google, Facebook, advertising--can put you into a "you loop", in which they show you what you think you want, and then you wind up wanting those things more because you see them more often. Invisibly, your momentary impulses (click on this, ignore that) shape your reality, and your reality shapes what you respond to. Since reading the book, I've found myself compulsively testing one of its main case studies: Google's automatically personalized search results. Try searching for "guns": I don't see the NRA on the first page, but friends do. Huge differences on "abortion" too: some people see Planned Parenthood, other people see Catholic.com. Even searching for "bias" shows different results to me vs my wife! Drawing on history, academic research, exclusive interviews, and a huge range of other sources, the author takes a hard look at the algorithms that increasingly shape how all of us think. He contends that unchecked profit-centric personalization threatens democracy. When you read the book, you'll come away convinced. And you'll appreciate how the book itself makes our democracy stronger.

The Filter Bubble does one of the most important things a book CAN do -- it sounds a warning about a major problem that has, til now, been mostly invisible. But Pariser doesn't just tell us how giants like Google and Facebook are limiting the information we see. He also explains, in clear, energetic prose, how the personalization of the Internet is affecting our relationships, our identities, our creativity and our democracy. As an added bonus, the book is a highly engaging and entertaining read -- packed with insights and anecdotes from fields as diverse as urban planning, advertising, literature, sociology, and computer science. At a time when exposure to surprising and challenging

information is getting harder and harder to come by, this book will definitely broaden your perspective.

This riveting book picks up where Pariser's explosive TED talk left off. In a voice that is as fun to read as it is smart, *The Filter Bubble* arms readers with a thorough understanding of the powers at play on the Internet today -- how they invisibly affect your experience, the implications of these effects for the individual as well as for society, and what each of us can do about it. Anyone who Googles, gets news online, shops online, or uses Facebook simply must read this book.

*The Filter Bubble* is a book everybody who cares about the Internet needs to read! We're entering a new period of growth in the basic functioning of the Internet. The web we once knew is changing - it's becoming personalized. This isn't always a bad thing - the Internet is massive and we need ways to make it relevant. But what's alarming is that these new personalization filters are changing things without us knowing and they're focused on making money. Websites need clicks and they're going to show us whatever articles, search results, ads, or data they can to get those clicks. This is a dangerous proposition. There are certain things we NEED to see, but might never click on. Like news from the ongoing wars in the Middle East. Also concerning is that the increase in personalization means we'll keep seeing things that re-affirm or personal beliefs. If you think partisan bickering is bad now, just wait. It's not all doom and gloom, far from it. What's most exciting is how early the book comes in the development of 'the new personalized web'. It's not a historical account, it's actively part of the ongoing discussions happening at Google, Facebook, and the New York Times (among many others). Eli has managed to place himself just in front of the tech wave - no small feat - while providing a detailed analysis of what's currently taking place. He also offers clear ways to resolve the situation, ways that work with the existing system and help protect the open Internet we all love. Very well worth the read - and then some!

Am I seeing an advertisement for life insurance because of my good credit score, or because tracking software says I rarely search for doctors and therefore look healthy? If Facebook eliminates a video of war carnage, is that a token of respect for the wounded or one more reflexive effort of a major company to ingratiate itself with a Washington establishment currently committed to indefinite military engagement in the Middle East? Does Google downrank sites because of their poor quality, or to maximize its own ad revenues? Questions like these will persist as long as the "filter bubble" exists. Pariser does a fantastic job showing how the web is increasingly becoming a hall of mirrors,

a perplexing set of chutes and ladders where algorithms can suddenly alter your view of the world (and status) without telling you. Read this brilliant book to find out the real costs of an "instant information age."

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