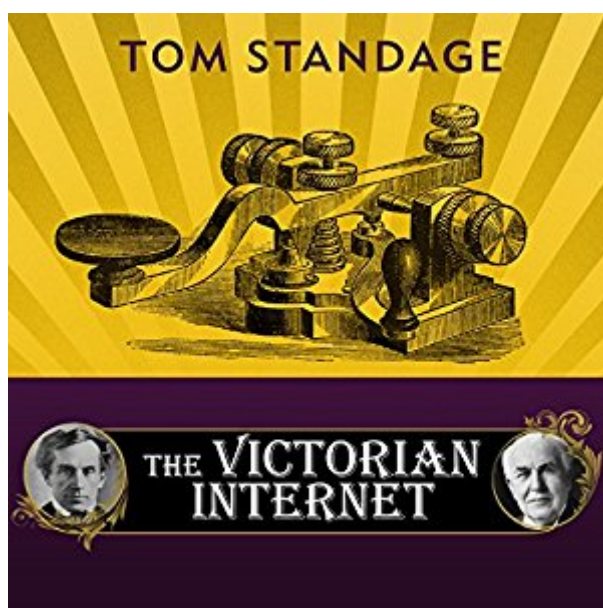The book was found

The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story Of The Telegraph And The Nineteenth Century's On-line Pioneers

Synopsis

The Victorian Internet tells the colorful story of the telegraph's creation and remarkable impact and of the visionaries, oddballs, and eccentrics who pioneered it, from eighteenth-century French scientist Jean-Antoine Nollet to Samuel F. B. Morse and Thomas Edison. The electric telegraph nullified distance and shrank the world quicker and further than ever before or since, and its story mirrors and predicts that of the Internet in numerous ways.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an entertaining little study on how the impact of the development of the internet on contemporary society uncanily paralleled the impact of the telegraph on Victorian society. Standage makes his case with clever historical reference and light humor. One can clearly see the similarities between a younger generation growing up with the "new" technology of telegraphy at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries and the- social impact made by internet culture on the generation which came of age at the turn of the 20th-21st century. Amusing to note how past luminaries like Thomas Edison could practically have been exchanged for more recent superstars like Steve Jobs or Bill Gates. And the problems encountered -- and engendered -- by both technologies were not dissimilar, either, as scoffers and luddites dragged their heals, even while well-healed entrupreneurs were looking for every possible way to make a buck off users of the new communication systems, and governments were arguing about if, and how to regulate the d&mned things. For a cogent and fascinating comparison of the golden age of telegraphy with today's internet, the Victorian Internet nicely fills that niche.

Tom Standage is onto something. It seems that everything we know about the Internet today, we've already done before. The turn of this century was a lot like the turn of the last century."The Victorian Internet" is all about our world and the invention of the Telegraph. As cyberpunk author Neal Stephenson once pointed out, the telegraph was the world's first global digital network. It's when we started trying to push voice down the copper lines that we mucked things up.In this book, you'll find technological wizardry, geek pioneers, global aspirations, long-distance romances, and online scams. You'll discover what 19th-Century chat was like. There are growing pains. We see fear for the future and fear of moral decline. The Telegraph represented a sudden, massive interconnection of people thousands of miles apart, and the effects of this overnight deluge of information is clear in reading. You have to remember that these were people used to feeling safe in their own homes, blissfully unaware of each other, and only vaguely informed of events going on in other countries.Standage does a nice job of hitting on the hottest topics of our time, without hitting the reader over the head to make a point. Cybergeeks will love his stops at Cryptography, code, and the other programming-like solutions people came up with to solve their problems. Fans of history will be amused by the parallels between life then and now as "old media" learns to stop worrying and embrace "new media".In a narrative style that resembles the British TV series "Connections", Standage shows us what each side of the Atlantic was up to, the race to connect the world, and the sheer determination and boundless optimism that made it all happen. There are also interesting tidbits along the way: we get facts about Samuel Morse and Thomas Edison that most history books ignore. There are anecdotes from 19th-century daily life that we can easily identify with today. All of it combines in a way that is easy to read, decently-paced, and fun to think about and discuss with others.I give this book 5 stars for being clever with presentation and for keeping the various threads together without seeming fragmented. Tom Standage moves us through history without jumping around, and references earlier sections to remind us of where things are going. If you like history, technology, or even the geekier topics of machine logic, programming, and cryptography, this book makes an excellent read.

My father was born in 1908, and grew up engaged in both amateur and professional radio. All his life he tried to bring up his telegraphy speed to that required to get an "Amateur Extra" ham radio license for his home radio facility. He never made it. Then I came along and suggested that he learn ASCII, the code being used for data transmissions in the computer world. He didn't get the joke.This book reminded me of his connection to telegraphy and made me realize both how much of modern

life isn't really new--but also how recently the genuinely new stuff happened. In particular, it never occurred to me before reading this book how incredible a step it was in the nineteenth century to be able to send messages over wires. Literally nothing like it had ever occurred before.And here we youngsters think that the internet is such a big deal. It is, of course, but the kinds of "revolutionary" characteristics we apply to it, actually had occurred before. The world seems smaller. Business can be transacted more efficiently. Romance is kindled. Both crime and crime prevention take on new aspects. Maybe world peace will be accomplished.The book is a good narrative of what happened when telegraphy over long distances became possible. Its only shortcoming was that the descriptions of each device were too superficial. I would have liked to understand better how each one worked.I do love the ironic note that ended the book: After the telegraph was replaced by telephones, and they were supplanted by the likes of worldwide Internet visual conferences, the new generation of youngsters are absolutely enamored with--get this!--how cool it is to be able to send text back and forth to each other! (Just this week I was talking to a colleague whose daughter refuses to speak by telephone. Anyone wanting to court her has to send a text message.)After all, AT&T really is the American Telephone and Telegraph company.

Great book! Just long enough to cover the subject matter. A very interesting look at the beginning, middle, and end of the telegraph.

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