A Social History Of American Technology

A Social History of American Technology: Shaping Society and Shaping Technology

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Summary: This guide explores the multifaceted relationship between technology and society in the United States, offering a comprehensive overview of a social history of American technology. It outlines best practices for researching and writing in this field, highlighting crucial themes, methodologies, and potential pitfalls to avoid. The guide examines how technological advancements have shaped American society, culture, politics, and economics, while also analyzing the reciprocal influence of social forces on the development and adoption of technologies. This guide aims to equip researchers and students with the necessary tools to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing conversation about a social history of American technology.

I. Understanding the Scope of a Social History of American Technology

The study of a social history of American technology goes beyond a simple chronological account of inventions. It delves into the complex interplay between technological innovation and societal structures, exploring how technological changes have influenced, and been influenced by, social, economic, political, and cultural forces. This approach necessitates a multidisciplinary perspective, drawing upon insights from history, sociology, anthropology, economics, and science and technology studies (STS).

A. Key Themes:

Technological Determinism vs. Social Construction of Technology: Examining the debate between the idea that technology drives societal change versus the idea that technology's development and use are shaped by social factors.
Innovation and its Social Consequences: Analyzing the social, economic, and environmental impact of technological advancements, including both intended and unintended consequences.
The Role of Class, Race, and Gender: Exploring how technological developments have affected different social groups differently, reinforcing or challenging existing inequalities.
The State and Technology: Examining the role of government policies, regulations, and funding in shaping technological innovation and diffusion.
Technology and Culture: Investigating the ways technology shapes cultural values, beliefs, and practices.

B. Methodological Approaches:

Effective research in a social history of American technology requires diverse methodologies including:

Primary Source Analysis: Utilizing archival materials, patents, corporate records, personal diaries, newspapers, and oral histories to gain nuanced insights.
Quantitative Analysis: Employing statistical methods to analyze large datasets related to technological adoption, economic growth, and social change.
Case Studies: Focusing on specific technological innovations and their societal impact, allowing for in-depth analysis.
Comparative Analysis: Comparing technological developments and their social impact across different regions, time periods, or social groups.

II. Common Pitfalls to Avoid in Studying a Social History of American Technology

Researchers must be mindful of several potential pitfalls when studying a social history of American technology:

Technological Whiggism: Avoiding the tendency to view technological progress as inherently positive and inevitable.
Ignoring the Social Context: Acknowledging that technology does not exist in a vacuum and is always embedded in a specific social, economic, and political context.
Oversimplification: Recognizing the complexity of the relationship between technology and society, avoiding simplistic causal explanations.
Bias: Being aware of one's own biases and actively seeking diverse perspectives.
Data limitations: Understanding the limitations of available data and employing appropriate methodologies to address data gaps.

III. Best Practices for Research and Writing

Producing high-quality research on a social history of American technology requires careful planning and execution. Best practices include:

Developing a Clear Research Question: Focusing on a specific and researchable question about the relationship between technology and society.
Thorough Literature Review: Familiarizing oneself with existing scholarship on the topic, building on prior research and identifying gaps in knowledge.
Rigorous Data Analysis: Employing appropriate methods for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.
Clear and Concise Writing: Communicating research findings effectively and engagingly.
Ethical Considerations: Ensuring responsible data handling and acknowledging all sources.

Conclusion

A social history of American technology provides crucial insights into the complex and dynamic relationship between technological innovation and societal transformation. By understanding the key themes, methodological approaches, and potential pitfalls, researchers can contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the shaping forces of American history. This field requires interdisciplinary collaboration and critical analysis to truly capture the rich interplay between technology and the societies it shapes.

FAQs

1. What is the difference between a technological history and a social history of technology? A technological history focuses primarily on the development of technology itself, while a social history examines the interaction between technology and society, considering the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts.

2. How does a social history of technology challenge technological determinism? It challenges the deterministic view by demonstrating how social factors—including cultural values, economic structures, and political decisions—shape the development, adoption, and impact of technology.

3. What are some examples of unintended consequences of technological innovation in American history? The environmental damage caused by industrialization, the social disruption caused by automation, and the widening gap between rich and poor fueled by technological advancement are all examples.

4. What is the role of government in a social history of American technology? Government plays a significant role through funding research, setting regulations, and shaping technological

development via military spending and industrial policy.

5. How can oral histories contribute to a social history of American technology? Oral histories provide firsthand accounts of people's experiences with technology, offering rich qualitative data that complement quantitative analyses.

6. What are some ethical considerations in researching a social history of technology? Researchers must ensure data privacy, avoid biases, and engage with communities affected by the technologies under study with sensitivity.

7. How can this field contribute to contemporary debates about technology? By understanding past technological changes and their social impacts, we can better anticipate and mitigate the potential consequences of current and future technological developments.

8. Where can I find primary sources for research on a social history of American technology? Archives, libraries, museums, and online databases are excellent sources. Specific repositories include the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and university archives.

9. What are some emerging trends in the field of a social history of American technology? Increasing emphasis on environmental history, global interconnectedness, and the digital revolution are defining current scholarship.

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a social history of american technology: A Social History of American Technology Ruth Schwartz Cowan, 1997 Ruth Schwartz Cowan demonstrates that technological change is neither sudden, nor discontinuous, but is linked to social developments that determine the tools that are invented and the ways in which they are used.

a social history of american technology: A Social History of American Technology Ruth Schwartz Cowan,

a social history of american technology: A Social History of American Technology Ruth Schwartz Cowan, Matthew H. Hersch, 2018 A Social History of American Technology, Second Edition, tells the story of American technology from the tools used by its earliest inhabitants to the technological systems--cars and computers, aircraft and antibiotics--that we are familiar with today. Ruth Schwartz Cowan and Matthew H. Hersch demonstrate how technological change has always been closely related to social and economic development, and examine the important mutual relationships between social history and technological change. They explain how the unique characteristics of American cultures and American geography have affected the technologies that have been invented, manufactured, and used throughout the years--and also the reverse: how those technologies have affected the daily lives, the unique cultures, and the environments of all Americans.

a social history of american technology: The Machine in America Carroll W. Pursell, 1995 From the medieval farm implements brought by the first colonists to the invisible links of the Internet, the history of technology in America is a history of our society as well. Arguing that the tools and processes we use are a part of our lives, not simply instruments of our purpose, historian Carroll Pursell analyzes technology's impact upon the lives of women and men, their work, politics, and social relationships--and in turn, their influence upon technological development. Pursell shows how both the idea of progress and the mechanical means to harness the forces of nature developed and changed as they were brought from the Old World to the New. He describes the ways in which American industrial and agricultural technology began to take on a distinctive shape as it adapted and extended the technical base of the industrial revolution. He discusses the innovation of an American System of Manufactures and the mechanization of agriculture; new systems of mining, lumbering, and farming, which helped conquer and define the West; and the technologies that shaped the rise of cities. And he shows how the export of technology helped to foster American hegemony both in theWestern Hemisphere and elsewhere in the world. Pursell also argues that American technology has created a social hegemony, not only over the way we live but also over how we evaluate that life. He shows that such developments as scientific management techniques and industrial research changed Americans' lives as much as the mass production of such durable consumer goods as radios and automobiles. In many ways, he concludes, today's military-industrial complex is the legacy of the intense cooperation betweenscience and technology during World War II.

a social history of american technology: American Technological Sublime David E. Nye, 1996-02-28 American Technological Sublime continues the exploration of the social construction of technology that David Nye began in his award-winning book Electrifying America. Here Nye examines the continuing appeal of the technological sublime (a term coined by Perry Miller) as a key to the nation's history, using as examples the natural sites, architectural forms, and technological achievements that ordinary people have valued intensely. Technology has long played a central role in the formation of Americans' sense of selfhood. From the first canal systems through the moon landing, Americans have, for better or worse, derived unity from the common feeling of awe inspired

by large-scale applications of technological prowess. American Technological Sublime continues the exploration of the social construction of technology that David Nye began in his award-winning book Electrifying America. Here Nye examines the continuing appeal of the technological sublime (a term coined by Perry Miller) as a key to the nation's history, using as examples the natural sites, architectural forms, and technological achievements that ordinary people have valued intensely. American Technological Sublime is a study of the politics of perception in industrial society. Arranged chronologically, it suggests that the sublime itself has a history - that sublime experiences are emotional configurations that emerge from new social and technological conditions, and that each new configuration to some extent undermines and displaces the older versions. After giving a short history of the sublime as an aesthetic category, Nye describes the reemergence and democratization of the concept in the early nineteenth century as an expression of the American sense of specialness. What has filled the American public with wonder, awe, even terror? David Nye selects the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, the Erie Canal, the first transcontinental railroad, Eads Bridge, Brooklyn Bridge, the major international expositions, the Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1909, the Empire State Building, and Boulder Dam. He then looks at the atom bomb tests and the Apollo mission as examples of the increasing ambivalence of the technological sublime in the postwar world. The festivities surrounding the rededication of the Statue of Liberty in 1986 become a touchstone reflecting the transformation of the American experience of the sublime over two centuries. Nye concludes with a vision of the modern-day consumer sublime as manifested in the fantasy world of Las Vegas.

a social history of american technology: *Early American Technology* Judith A. McGaw, 2014-01-01 This collection of original essays documents technology's centrality to the history of early America. Unlike much previous scholarship, this volume emphasizes the quotidian rather than the exceptional: the farm household seeking to preserve food or acquire tools, the surveyor balancing economic and technical considerations while laying out a turnpike, the woman of child-bearing age employing herbal contraceptives, and the neighbors of a polluted urban stream debating issues of property, odor, and health. These cases and others drawn from brewing, mining, farming, and woodworking enable the authors to address recent historiographic concerns, including the environmental aspects of technological change and the gendered nature of technical knowledge. Brooke Hindle's classic 1966 essay on early American technology is also reprinted, and his view of the field is reassessed. A bibliographical essay and summary of Hindle's bibliographic findings conclude the volume. The contributors are Judith A. McGaw, Robert C. Post, Susan E. Klepp, Michal McMahon, Patrick W. O'Bannon, Sarah F. McMahon, Donald C. Jackson, Robert B. Gordon, Carolyn C. Cooper, and Nina E. Lerman.

a social history of american technology: Technology and American Society Gary Cross, Rick Szostak, 2018-12-21 Providing a global perspective on the development of American technology, Technology and American Society offers a historical narrative detailing major technological transformations over the last three centuries. With coverage devoted to both dramatic breakthroughs and incremental innovations, authors Gary Cross and Rick Szostak analyze the cause-and-effect relationship of technological change and its role in the constant drive for improvement and modernization. This fully-updated 3rd edition extends coverage of industry, home, office, agriculture, transport, constructions, and services into the twenty-first century, concluding with a new chapter on recent electronic and technological advances. Technology and American Society remains the ideal introduction to the myriad interactions of technological advancement with social, economic, cultural, and military change throughout the course of American history.

a social history of american technology: Technology and the African-American Experience Bruce Sinclair, 2004 The intersection of race and technology: blackcreativity and the economic and social functions of the myth ofdisengenuity.

a social history of american technology: *A Social History of Truth* Steven Shapin, 2011-11-18 How do we come to trust our knowledge of the world? What are the means by which we distinguish true from false accounts? Why do we credit one observational statement over another? In A Social

History of Truth, Shapin engages these universal questions through an elegant recreation of a crucial period in the history of early modern science: the social world of gentlemen-philosophers in seventeenth-century England. Steven Shapin paints a vivid picture of the relations between gentlemanly culture and scientific practice. He argues that problems of credibility in science were practically solved through the codes and conventions of genteel conduct: trust, civility, honor, and integrity. These codes formed, and arguably still form, an important basis for securing reliable knowledge about the natural world. Shapin uses detailed historical narrative to argue about the establishment of factual knowledge both in science and in everyday practice. Accounts of the mores and manners of gentlemen-philosophers are used to illustrate Shapin's broad claim that trust is imperative for constituting every kind of knowledge. Knowledge-making is always a collective enterprise: people have to know whom to trust in order to know something about the natural world.

a social history of american technology: <u>America as Second Creation</u> David E. Nye, 2004-09-17 An exploration of the dialogue that emerged after 1776 between different visions of what it meant to use new technologies to transform the land. After 1776, the former American colonies began to reimagine themselves as a unified, self-created community. Technologies had an important role in the resulting national narratives, and a few technologies assumed particular prominence. Among these were the axe, the mill, the canal, the railroad, and the irrigation dam. In this book David Nye explores the stories that clustered around these technologies. In doing so, he rediscovers an American story of origins, with America conceived as a second creation built in harmony with God's first creation. While mainstream Americans constructed technological foundation stories to explain their place in the New World, however, marginalized groups told other stories of destruction and loss. Native Americans protested the loss of their forests, fishermen resisted the construction of dams, and early environmentalists feared the exhaustionof resources. A water mill could be viewed as the kernel of a new community or as a new way to exploit labor. If passengers comprehended railways as part of a larger narrative about American expansion and progress, many farmers attacked railroad land grants. To explore these contradictions, Nye devotes alternating chapters to narratives of second creation and to narratives of those who rejected it.Nye draws on popular literature, speeches, advertisements, paintings, and many other media to create a history of American foundation stories. He shows how these stories were revised periodically, as social and economic conditions changed, without ever erasing the earlier stories entirely. The image of the isolated frontier family carving a homestead out of the wilderness with an axe persists to this day, alongside later images and narratives. In the book's conclusion, Nye considers the relation between these earlier stories and such later American developments as the conservation movement, narratives of environmental recovery, and the idealization of wilderness.

a social history of american technology: *America by Design* David F. Noble, 2013-01-23 Hailed a "significant contribution" by The New York Times, David Noble's book America by Design describes the factors that have shaped the history of scientific technology in the United States. Since the beginning, technology and industry have been undeniably intertwined, and Noble demonstrates how corporate capitalism has not only become the driving force behind the development of technology in this country but also how scientific research—particularly within universities—has been dominated by the corporations who fund it, who go so far as to influence the education of the engineers that will one day create the technology to be used for capitalist gain. Noble reveals that technology, often thought to be an independent science, has always been a means to an end for the men pulling the strings of Corporate America—and it was these men that laid down the plans for the design of the modern nation today.

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how technologies interact with race, gender, class, and other organizing structures in American society

a social history of american technology: The Rise of the Technocrats W.H.G. Armytage, 2013-10-28 First published in 2006. The ambitious role cast for scientists in public affairs has been matched by an equal coyness on the part of scientists to play it. Yet in spite of themselves, they have been virtually dragged on to the political stage because of their 'collectivities' - groups formed over the last four centuries often more fugitive than institutional - which have helped modify the human environment, thereby enabling men to emancipate themselves from the tyranny of the present and plan for the future. The byproducts of such plans, from the great botanical gardens to the seed beds of physical scientists like the Ecole Polytechnique, have also incubated further ideas about the relation of science and society that are ecumenical in scope. Indeed the positivist overtones of the Polytechnique herald the transition from platocracy to technocracy, for the technical intelligentsia trained its German, Russian and American counterparts have effected a quasi-religious synthesis of physics and politics. In this 'planning' was the central theme. The social history of such planning (with the concomitant views on the social organisation of science) is the subject of the book Pressurising it is the conviction that we can identify a particular thing only by pointing to the various things it successively was before it became that particular thing that it will presently cease to be, and the story, which begins four hundred years ago and ends in 1964.

a social history of american technology: The Social Construction of Technological Systems Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas Parke Hughes, Trevor J. Pinch, Trevor Pinch, 1989 The impact of technology on society is clear and unmistakeable. The influence of society on technology is more subtle. The 13 essays in this book have been written by a diverse group of scholars united by a common interest in creating a new field - the sociology of technology. They draw on a wide array of case studies - from cooking stoves to missile systems, from 15th-century Portugal to today's Al labs - to outline an original research program based on a synthesis of ideas from the social studies of science and the history of technology. Together they affirm the need for a study of technology that gives equal weight to technical, social, economic, and political questions--Back cover.

a social history of american technology: *Forces of Production* David Noble, 2017-07-12 Focusing on the design and implementation of computer-based automatic machine tools, David F. Noble challenges the idea that technology has a life of its own. Technology has been both a convenient scapegoat and a universal solution, serving to disarm critics, divert attention, depoliticize debate, and dismiss discussion of the fundamental antagonisms and inequalities that continue to beset America. This provocative study of the postwar automation of the American metal-working industry—the heart of a modern industrial economy—explains how dominant institutions like the great corporations, the universities, and the military, along with the ideology of modern engineering shape, the development of technology. Noble shows how the system of numerical control, perfected at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and put into general industrial use, was chosen over competing systems for reasons other than the technical and economic superiority typically advanced by its promoters. Numerical control took shape at an MIT laboratory rather than in a manufacturing setting, and a market for the new technology was created, not by cost-minded producers, but instead by the U. S. Air Force. Competing methods, equally promising, were rejected because they left control of production in the hands of skilled workers, rather than in those of management or programmers. Noble demonstrates that engineering design is influenced by political, economic, managerial, and sociological considerations, while the deployment of equipment—illustrated by a detailed case history of a large General Electric plant in Massachusetts—can become entangled with such matters as labor classification, shop organization, managerial responsibility, and patterns of authority. In its examination of technology as a human, social process, Forces of Production is a path-breaking contribution to the understanding of this phenomenon in American society.

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home.

a social history of american technology: Technology in America Carroll Pursell, 1990-04-12 This is a collection of essays focusing on the spread and elaboration of American technology, and on the men and women who shaped it. Beginning with technology of America's Wooden Age, the authors discuss Jefferson's perception of the role of technology in a democratic society; the American System of Manufactures of Eli Whitney and others; Thomas P. Jones and the institutionalization of industrialization in educational reforms; McCormick and the spread of industrialization to agriculture; and James Eads and the rise of transportation networks. ISBN 0-262-66049-0 (pbk.): $9.95.

a social history of american technology: *Technology and the Historian* Adam Crymble, 2021-04-13 Charting the evolution of practicing digital history Historians have seen their field transformed by the digital age. Research agendas, teaching and learning, scholarly communication, the nature of the archive—all have undergone a sea change that in and of itself constitutes a fascinating digital history. Yet technology's role in the field's development remains a glaring blind spot among digital scholars. Adam Crymble mines private and web archives, social media, and oral histories to show how technology and historians have come together. Using case studies, Crymble merges histories and philosophies of the field, separating issues relevant to historians from activities in the broader digital humanities movement. Key themes include the origin myths of digital historical research; a history of mass digitization of sources; how technology influenced changes in the curriculum; a portrait of the self-learning system that trains historians and the problems with that system; how blogs became a part of outreach and academic writing; and a roadmap for the continuing study of history in the digital era.

a social history of american technology: American Technology Carroll Pursell, 2001-02-08 American Technology brings together ten fascinating and important stories of the ways in which Americans, from colonial times to the present, have embraced, rejected, interacted with, and understood the technologies with which they have lived and worked. Topics include the colonial home, the shop floor, the doctor's office, and the telephone exchange, as well as New England mill-sites, nuclear power, and the Internet. Each scholarly account is accompanied by primary documents and a list of further readings.

a social history of american technology: The American Robot Dustin A. Abnet, 2020-03-27 Although they entered the world as pure science fiction, robots are now very much a fact of everyday life. Whether a space-age cyborg, a chess-playing automaton, or simply the smartphone in our pocket, robots have long been a symbol of the fraught and fearful relationship between ourselves and our creations. Though we tend to think of them as products of twentieth-century technology—the word "robot" itself dates to only 1921—as a concept, they have colored US society and culture for far longer, as Dustin A. Abnet shows to dazzling effect in The American Robot. In tracing the history of the idea of robots in US culture, Abnet draws on intellectual history, religion, literature, film, and television. He explores how robots and their many kin have not only conceptually connected but literally embodied some of the most critical questions in modern culture. He also investigates how the discourse around robots has reinforced social and economic inequalities, as well as fantasies of mass domination—chilling thoughts that the recent increase in job automation has done little to quell. The American Robot argues that the deep history of robots has abetted both the literal replacement of humans by machines and the figurative transformation of humans into machines, connecting advances in technology and capitalism to individual and societal change. Look beneath the fears that fracture our society, Abnet tells us, and you're likely to find a robot lurking there.

a social history of american technology: The Oxford Encyclopedia of the History of American Science, Medicine, and Technology Hugh Richard Slotten, 2014-10-28 Science, medicine, and technology have become increasingly important to the average individual in modern society. The importance of these three fields is in many ways one of the defining characteristics of modernity. Understanding their history is essential for educated individuals. Science, medicine, and

technology are not static endeavors but processes, bodies of knowledge, tools, and techniques that are constantly growing and changing. The entries in this encyclopedia explore the changing character of science, medicine, and technology in the United States; the key individuals, institutions, and organizations responsible for major developments; and the concepts, practices, and processes underlying these changes. Especially since the early decades of the twentieth century, American science, medicine, and technology have played dominant roles internationally. Entries explore distinctive characteristics of American institutions and culture that help explain this development.At the same time, the encyclopedia situates specific events, theories, practices, and institutions in their proper historical context and explores their impact on American society and culture. Entries are written by the experts in the field. Students not only from the humanities and social sciences but also from the sciences and the medical sciences should be attracted to the broad-ranging and in-depth analysis in the encyclopedia.

a social history of american technology: Why America Needs a Left Eli Zaretsky, 2013-04-26 The United States today cries out for a robust, self-respecting, intellectually sophisticated left, yet the very idea of a left appears to have been discredited. In this brilliant new book, Eli Zaretsky rethinks the idea by examining three key moments in American history: the Civil War, the New Deal and the range of New Left movements in the 1960s and after including the civil rights movement, the women's movement and gay liberation.In each period, he argues, the active involvement of the left - especially its critical interaction with mainstream liberalism - proved indispensable. American liberalism, as represented by the Democratic Party, is necessarily spineless and ineffective without a left. Correspondingly, without a strong liberal center, the left becomes sectarian, authoritarian, and worse. Written in an accessible way for the general reader and the undergraduate student, this book provides a fresh perspective on American politics and political history. It has often been said that the idea of a left originated in the French Revolution and is distinctively European; Zaretsky argues, by contrast, that America has always had a vibrant and powerful left. And he shows that in those critical moments when the country returns to itself, it is on its left/liberal bases that it comes to feel most at home.

a social history of american technology: Technology and the Logic of American Racism Sarah E. Chinn, 2000-09-13 In this book, Sarah E. Chinn pulls together what seems to be opposite discourses--the information-driven languages of law and medicine and the subjective logics of racism--to examine how racial identity has been constructed in the United States over the past century. She examines a range of primary social case studies such as the American Red Cross' lamentable decision to segregate the blood of black and white donors during World War II, and its ramifications for American culture, and more recent examples that reveal the racist nature of criminology, such as the recent trial of O.J. Simpson. Among several key American literary texts, she looks at Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson, a novel whose plot turns on issues of racial identity and which was written at a time when scientific and popular interest in evidence of the body, such as fingerprinting, was at a peak.

a social history of american technology: *Race After Technology* Ruha Benjamin, 2019-07-09 From everyday apps to complex algorithms, Ruha Benjamin cuts through tech-industry hype to understand how emerging technologies can reinforce White supremacy and deepen social inequity. Benjamin argues that automation, far from being a sinister story of racist programmers scheming on the dark web, has the potential to hide, speed up, and deepen discrimination while appearing neutral and even benevolent when compared to the racism of a previous era. Presenting the concept of the "New Jim Code," she shows how a range of discriminatory designs encode inequity by explicitly amplifying racial hierarchies; by ignoring but thereby replicating social divisions; or by aiming to fix racial bias but ultimately doing quite the opposite. Moreover, she makes a compelling case for race itself as a kind of technology, designed to stratify and sanctify social injustice in the architecture of everyday life. This illuminating guide provides conceptual tools for decoding tech promises with sociologically informed skepticism. In doing so, it challenges us to question not only the technologies we are sold but also the ones we ourselves manufacture. Visit the book's free

a social history of american technology: Histories of Technology, the Environment and Modern Britain Jon Agar, Jacob Ward, 2018-04-09 Histories of Technology, the Environment and Modern Britain brings together historians with a wide range of interests to take a uniquely wide-lens view of how technology and the environment have been intimately and irreversibly entangled in Britain over the last 300 years. It combines, for the first time, two perspectives with much to say about Britain since the industrial revolution: the history of technology and environmental history. Technologies are modified environments, just as nature is to varying extents engineered. Furthermore, technologies and our living and non-living environment are both predominant material forms of organisation – and self-organisation – that surround and make us. Both have changed over time, in intersecting ways. Technologies discussed in the collection include bulldozers, submarine cables, automobiles, flood barriers, medical devices, museum displays and biotechnologies. Environments investigated include bogs, cities, farms, places of natural beauty and pollution, land and sea. The book explores this diversity but also offers an integrated framework for understanding these intersections.

a social history of american technology: Technical Innovation in American History Rosanne Welch, Peg A. Lamphier, 2019-02-22 Volume 1. Colonial America to 1865 -- volume 2. Reconstruction through World War II -- volume 3. The Cold War to the present.

a social history of american technology: Battle of Britain The Movie Dilip Sarkar, Robert J Rudhall, 2023-06-30 Released in 1969, the film Battle of Britain went on to become one of the most iconic war movies ever produced. The film drew many respected British actors to accept roles as key figures of the battle, including Sir Laurence Olivier as Hugh Dowding and Trevor Howard as Keith Park. It also starred Michael Caine, Christopher Plummer and Robert Shaw as squadron leaders. As well as its large all-star international cast, the film was notable for its spectacular flying sequences which were on a far grander scale than anything that had been seen on film before. At the time of its release, Battle of Britain was singled out for its efforts to portray the events of the summer of 1940 in great accuracy. To achieve this, Battle of Britain veterans such as Group Captain Tom Gleave, Wing Commander Robert Stanford Tuck, Wing Commander Douglas Bader, Squadron Leader BolesÅ□aw DrobiÅ□ski and Luftwaffe General Adolf Galland were all involved as consultants. This detailed description of the making of the film is supported by a mouth-watering selection of pictures that were taken during the production stages. The images cover not only the many vintage aircraft used in the film, but also the airfields, the actors, and even the merchandise which accompanied the filmâ□□s release in 1969 â□□ plus a whole lot more. There are numerous air-to-air shots of the Spitfires, Messerschmitts, Hurricanes and Heinkels that were brought together for the film. There are also images that capture the moment that Battle of Britain veterans, some of whom were acting as consultants, visited the sets. Interviews with people who worked on the film, such as Hamish Mahaddie, John Blake and Ron Goodwin, among others, bring the story to life.

a social history of american technology: The Technology Trap Carl Benedikt Frey, 2020-09-22 From the Industrial Revolution to the age of artificial intelligence, Carl Benedikt Frey offers a sweeping account of the history of technological progress and how it has radically shifted the distribution of economic and political power among society's members. As the author shows, the Industrial Revolution created unprecedented wealth and prosperity over the long run, but the immediate consequences of mechanization were devastating for large swaths of the population.These trends broadly mirror those in our current age of automation. But, just as the Industrial Revolution eventually brought about extraordinary benefits for society, artificial intelligence systems have the potential to do the same. Benedikt Frey demonstrates that in the midst of another technological revolution, the lessons of the past can help us to more effectively face the present. --From publisher description.

a social history of american technology: *Technology* Eric Schatzberg, 2018-11-12 In modern life, technology is everywhere. Yet as a concept, technology is a mess. In popular discourse, technology is little more than the latest digital innovations. Scholars do little better, offering up

competing definitions that include everything from steelmaking to singing. In Technology: Critical History of a Concept, Eric Schatzberg explains why technology is so difficult to define by examining its three thousand year history, one shaped by persistent tensions between scholars and technical practitioners. Since the time of the ancient Greeks, scholars have tended to hold technicians in low esteem, defining technical practices as mere means toward ends defined by others. Technicians, in contrast, have repeatedly pushed back against this characterization, insisting on the dignity, creativity, and cultural worth of their work. The tension between scholars and technicians continued from Aristotle through Francis Bacon and into the nineteenth century. It was only in the twentieth century that modern meanings of technology arose: technology as the industrial arts, technology as applied science, and technology as technique. Schatzberg traces these three meanings to the present day, when discourse about technology has become pervasive, but confusion among the three principal meanings of technology remains common. He shows that only through a humanistic concept of technology can we understand the complex human choices embedded in our modern world.

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a social history of american technology: *How the World Changed Social Media* Daniel Miller, Elisabetta Costa, Nell Haynes, Tom McDonald, Razvan Nicolescu, Jolynna Sinanan, Juliano Spyer, Shriram Venkatraman, Xinyuan Wang, 2016-02-29 How the World Changed Social Media is the first book in Why We Post, a book series that investigates the findings of anthropologists who each spent 15 months living in communities across the world. This book offers a comparative analysis summarising the results of the research and explores the impact of social media on politics and gender, education and commerce. What is the result of the increased emphasis on visual communication? Are we becoming more individual or more social? Why is public social media so conservative? Why does equality online fail to shift inequality offline? How did memes become the moral police of the internet? Supported by an introduction to the project's academic framework and theoretical terms that help to account for the findings, the book argues that the only way to appreciate and understand something as intimate and ubiquitous as social media is to be immersed

in the lives of the people who post. Only then can we discover how people all around the world have already transformed social media in such unexpected ways and assess the consequences

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a social history of american technology: Work's Intimacy Melissa Gregg, 2013-04-23 This book provides a long-overdue account of online technology and its impact on the work and lifestyles of professional employees. It moves between the offices and homes of workers in the knew knowledge economy to provide intimate insight into the personal, family, and wider social tensions emerging in today's rapidly changing work environment. Drawing on her extensive research, Gregg shows that new media technologies encourage and exacerbate an older tendency among salaried professionals to put work at the heart of daily concerns, often at the expense of other sources of intimacy and fulfillment. New media technologies from mobile phones to laptops and tablet computers, have been marketed as devices that give us the freedom to work where we want, when we want, but little attention has been paid to the consequences of this shift, which has seen work move out of the office and into cafés, trains, living rooms, dining rooms, and bedrooms. This professional presence bleed leads to work concerns impinging on the personal lives of employees in new and unforseen ways. This groundbreaking book explores how aspiring and established professionals each try to cope with the unprecedented intimacy of technologically-mediated work, and how its seductions seem poised to triumph over the few remaining relationships that may stand in its way.

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Shannon Vallor, 2022 The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Technology gives readers a view into this increasingly vital and urgently needed domain of philosophical understanding, offering an in-depth collection of leading and emerging voices in the philosophy of technology. The thirty-two contributions in this volume cut across and connect diverse philosophical traditions and methodologies. They reveal the often-neglected importance of technology for virtually every subfield of philosophy, including ethics, epistemology, philosophy of science, metaphysics, aesthetics, philosophy of language, and political theory. The Handbook also gives readers a new sense of what philosophy looks like when fully engaged with the disciplines and domains of knowledge that continue to transform the material and practical features and affordances of our world, including engineering, arts and design, computing, and the physical and social sciences. The chapters reveal enduring conceptual themes concerning technology's role in the shaping of human knowledge, identity, power, values, and freedom, while bringing a philosophical lens to the profound transformations of our existence brought by innovations ranging from biotechnology and nuclear engineering to artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and robotics. This new collection challenges the reader with provocative and original insights on the history, concepts, problems, and questions to be brought to bear upon humanity's complex and evolving relationship to technology.

a social history of american technology: The Web as History Niels Brügger, Ralph Schroeder, 2017-03-06 The World Wide Web has now been in use for more than 20 years. From early browsers to today's principal source of information, entertainment and much else, the Web is an integral part of our daily lives, to the extent that some people believe 'if it's not online, it doesn't exist.' While this statement is not entirely true, it is becoming increasingly accurate, and reflects the Web's role as an indispensable treasure trove. It is curious, therefore, that historians and social scientists have thus far made little use of the Web to investigate historical patterns of culture and society, despite making good use of letters, novels, newspapers, radio and television programmes, and other pre-digital artefacts.This volume argues that now is the time to ask what we have learnt from the Web so far. The 12 chapters explore this topic from a number of interdisciplinary angles – through histories of national web spaces and case studies of different government and media domains – as well as an introduction that provides an overview of this exciting new area of research.

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