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Virtual Unreality: The New Era Of Digital Deception

VIRTUAL UNREALITY

THE NEW ERA OF DIGITAL DECEPTION

CHARLES SEIFE

AUTHOR OF *ZERO* AND *PROOFINESS*

"**Virtual Unreality** is a talisman we gullible can wield in the hope that we won't get fooled again." —Dwight Garner, **The New York Times**
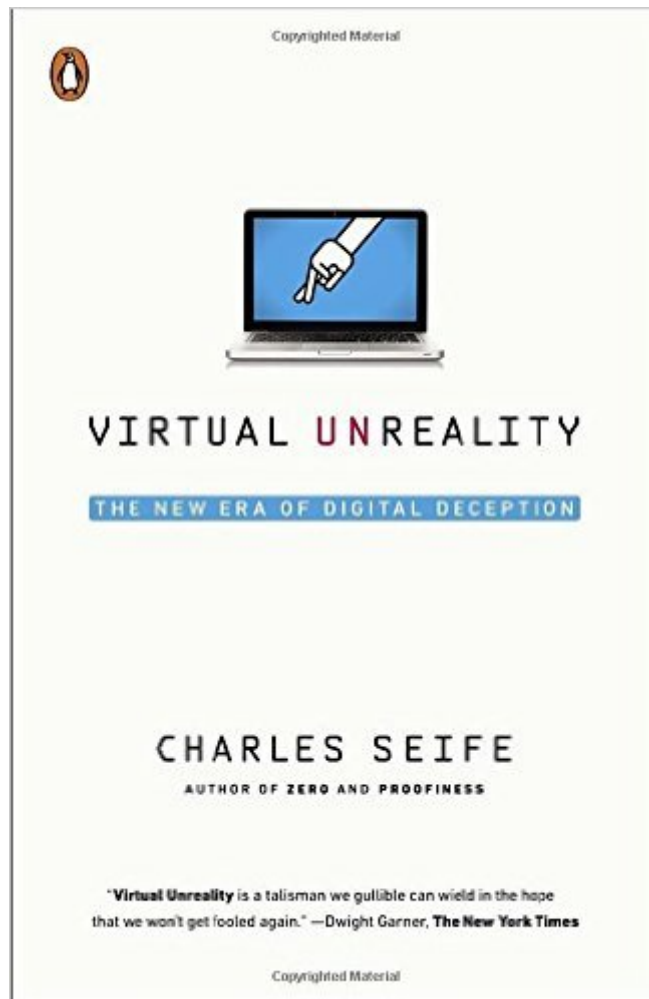
Synopsis

The author of Zero and Proofiness explains how to tell truth from fantasy in the digital world, and why it mattersToday, the Internet allows us to spread information faster and to more people than ever beforeâ ”never mind whether itâ ™s true or not. In Virtual Unreality, mathematician, science reporter, and journalist watchdog Charles Seife takes us deep into the information jungle and cuts a path through the trickery, fakery, and cyber skullduggery that the Internet enables. Providing a much-needed toolkit to help separate fact from fiction, Seife, with his trademark wit and skepticism, addresses the problems that face us every time we turn on our computers and Google our most recent medical symptoms, read a politicianâ ™s tweet, fact-check something on Wikipedia, or start an online relationship. Let the clicker beware.

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Customer Reviews

Charles Seife has written a thought-provoking book about information in the digital age, and it's a book that should scare you as well as educate you. Seife does more than just talk about Internet hoaxes and misinformation; he also discusses the history of past generations of hoaxes and scams, and how the Internet has dramatically altered the playing field. The book is extensively footnoted, as well, showing where his information comes from. With the Kindle edition, this was a bit of a problem, as I occasionally clicked a link when I was simply trying to turn the page.Topics in the book include such things as:- Stock manipulation- Spam and the various money-making schemes that would have been impossible prior to the Digital Age- Wikipedia and the dangers of relying on it.-

Plagiarism- How the Digital Age has changed, and is continuing to change, the way that news is gathered and disseminated.- Fake identities, fake profiles, and sock puppets.- How search engines have changed not just the way that information is shared but also how it is created.- Digital manipulation.- Social mediaAnd the "Top Ten Dicta of the Internet Skeptic," including such gems as "A social media site's purpose is to serve its users -- in the same sense as a zoo's purpose is to serve its animals."The book can be dry at times and some of this information is pretty widely known. But I'm a pretty well-informed technical guy who makes a living in the online world and some of the information here was eye-opening, not just the details but the history and theory behind it. Seife also provides some practical advice on how you can protect yourself, at least to a certain extent. The listed length of the book is a bit misleading, by the way, since 30% of the book consists of links, footnotes, and an extensive index.

Virtual Unreality is a pretty impressive book with a very accurate title. I thought I was pretty internet-savvy, and that I could spot a hoax a mile away. Turns out that the "unreality" goes beyond the requests to transfer large sums of money into my bank account and Facebook tracking my likes. There is a quote in this book to the effect that if you aren't paying for something, then you are what is being sold. Pretty disturbing stuff, and seemingly true. I also had no idea how much the internet has changed the advertising and news industries.If you think you know everything about the internet, and feel like you could never be fooled, then read this book. I'll bet that there is some way that you have been fooled and never realized it. Virtual Unreality not only tells you how you get tricked, it also tells you how avoid being fooled. A fast, worthwhile read.Also, I have a large sum of money that I could tranfer to you - I just need $500 to help me release the funds.

I donâ ™t consider myself very Internet savvy. Nor am I a big time Internet user/abuser. But I do use the Internet so I did feel the need to read this book particularly since its subtitle is something that I have thought about for a long time. Also, Iâ ™ve read a number of this authorâ ™s books and therefore knew that, at the very least, the book would be quite enjoyable. I was not disappointed.Overall, I found that much of the information contained here is really beyond my need-to-know, at least for the present. However, some information was truly astonishing and useful to me â " particularly the chapter on Wikipedia. I think that this alone was worth the read. Something else that I did not expect to find here is information on various aspects of psychology and human behaviour - which, in retrospect, makes a lot of sense. Facebook, LinkedIn, Match.com and several other social media were also discussed to varying degrees.As usual, the authorâ ™s writing style is

clear, friendly, lively and quite captivating. As far as the bookâ ™s audience is concerned, I think that anyone who uses the Internet in some capacity will likely benefit, to varying degrees, from reading this book and heeding its warnings.

Lots of good information here. While many are aware of fake profiles, scams and falsehoods online, too many aren't. Using real life examples, the author makes a case for increasing awareness from health to news to finances.In full disclosure, I read my copy from NetGalley, but there is a great deal of good information for anyone online. Many to to the internet to find information, but much of that information is mush. Much is inaccurate and some downright dangerous.I see people in a panic about their food because of something they saw online - something that isn't true or has a grain of truth to it. If you're online, read this book. It, perhaps, isn't the most entertaining of books but there's good information about the power of volume on the internet. Get it, read it, learn from it.

I have read a bunch about this topic, so there wasn't a lot of fundamental info for me. It would be very instructive for most people I know, but most are too much involved with their digital life, or avoiding that, to bother.I loved the Cow Clicker and Curiosity Cube Game section. New to me but not at all a surprise. Maybe KK's Hollywood will be the object of a similar protest game to come.Glad I didn't skip the Appendix. The Top Ten Dicta of the Internet Skeptic was funny and worth keeping in mind. I like the irony of item 10 and the title. Good one.

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