
24/7, the title of Robert Hassan’s and Robert E. Purser’s edited volume on “time and temporality in the network society,” refers to the present experience in which we find ourselves always on and always available to work or to consume (3). Our network society comprises several generations, who share, more or less, the experience of a society driven by new information communication technologies (ICTs). Following WW II, the post-industrial era has been demarcated by the pervasiveness of computer technologies; moving slowly at first, they have come to operate at speeds propelling socio-cultural changes at a rate that decreases the space and time needed by most people to acknowledge the ways in which these changes are shaping, and being shaped, by them. Alvin Toffler described this condition as “future shock” back in 1970, but it was not informed by the more recent momentum of ICTs. Three decades is a very long time when we consider the tremendous number of developments and adoptions of computer technology, the increase in the temporal rate of information flow, social expectations, and economic globalization.

To foreground the complexity of the socio-technical temporal shifts that have taken place, let’s consider a simple example—the activity of seeking information by going to the library or going to the Internet. For the average person, in 1970 through the 1980s, conducting research meant going to the library. In 2008, engaging in the everyday activity of accessing information no longer requires, for most, attending to the limits of the physical structure of the library, such as the hours of operation, card carrying access, and availability of texts. In contrast, seeking information through the Internet often requires little to no consideration for mobility to a physical structure, hours of operation, or queuing for text. How do we understand this new set of spatial and temporal conditions of information access shaped knowledge acquisition among the generations of the network society? How can thinking about the difference between Encyclopedia Britannica and Wikipedia serve to inform our notions about temporality and human activity? About the socio-economic politics of Internet access and the possibility of cyber-librarians? Upon what theoretical ground do we stand from which to take up such questions, continuing the

pursuit of examining time and everyday activity, and with respect to cultural specificity?7

Grappling with these questions and many more, Hassan’s and Purser’s collection of essays brings a mark of distinction to the theoretical and material analysis of time and temporality in the post-industrial era. The volume engages the reader with the work of thirteen scholars who communicate the experience of generations engaging in the theoretical constructs of time and space, of new media technologies that disrupt linear notions of time, and empirical accounts of the social, economic, and political institutional forces.8 These essays are divided into four sections, each lifting up a different corner of the time puzzle, taking us deeper into conjectures about the nature of clock time and its contemporary machinations in the network society. The arguments substantiate that the experience of time within which we are currently operating requires particular theoretical foci. However, they resist the impetus to offer a singular view, to stabilize a standpoint from which we could definitively state that this is what it means to experience time in our network society. This complexity pushes readers to come up with their own sense of what time means for them; and, once achieved, it can easily be disrupted by the arguments posed in another section of the book. This reflexive, active reading could not be more appropriate to another area of study as it is to the study of post-industrial time.

Another strength of this book is the sectional divisions of the essays, which do more than make a stylistic point about space. As a reader, I may start a book from the end as often as I start it from the beginning, an often disconcerting

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