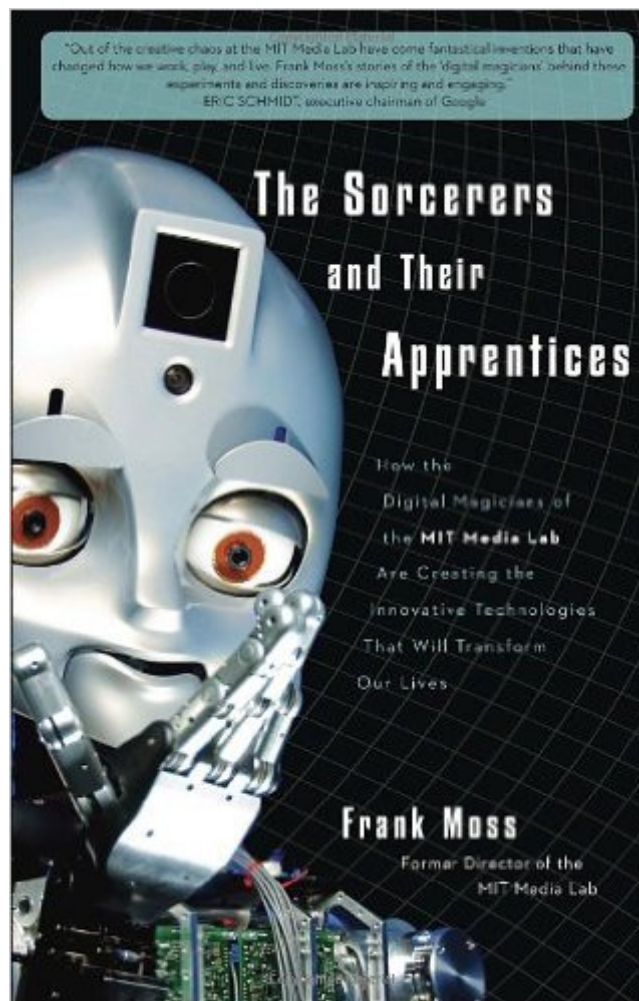


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The Sorcerers And Their Apprentices: How The Digital Magicians Of The MIT Media Lab Are Creating The Innovative Technologies That Will Transform Our Lives



Synopsis

If you've ever read a book on an e-reader, unleashed your inner rock star playing Guitar Hero, built a robot with LEGO Mindstorms, or ridden in a vehicle with child-safe air bags, then you've experienced first hand just a few of the astounding innovations that have come out of the Media Lab over the past 25 years. But that's old hat for today's researchers, who are creating technologies that will have a much deeper impact on the quality of people's lives over the next quarter century. In this exhilarating tour of the Media Lab's inner sanctums, we'll meet the professors and their students - the Sorcerers and their Apprentices - and witness first hand the creative magic behind inventions such as: * Nexi, a mobile humanoid robot with such sophisticated social skills she can serve as a helpful and understanding companion for the sick and elderly. * CityCar, a foldable, stackable, electric vehicle of the future that will redefine personal transportation in cities and revolutionize urban life. * Sixth Sense, a compact wearable device that transforms any surface - wall, tabletop or even your hand - into a touch screen computer.* PowerFoot, a lifelike robotic prosthesis that enables amputees to walk as naturally as if it were a real biological limb. Through inspiring stories of people who are using Media Lab innovations to confront personal challenges - like a man with cerebral palsy who is unable to hum a tune or pick up an instrument yet is using an ingenious music composition system to unleash his inner Mozart, and a woman with a rare life-threatening condition who co-invented a revolutionary web service that enables patients to participate in the search for their own cures - we'll see how the Media Lab is empowering us all with the tools to take control of our health, wealth, and happiness. Along the way, Moss reveals the highly unorthodox approach to creativity and invention that makes all this possible, explaining how the Media Lab cultivates an open and boundary-less environment where researchers from a broad array of disciplines - from musicians to neuroscientists to visual artists to computer engineers - have the freedom to follow their passions and take bold risks unthinkable elsewhere. The Sorcerers and Their Apprentices can serve as a blueprint for how to fix our broken innovation ecosystem and bring about the kind of radical change required to meet the challenges of the 21st century. It is a must-read for anyone striving to be more innovative as an individual, as a businessperson, or as a member of society. Also includes 16 pages of color photos highlighting some of the lab's most visually stunning inventions - and the people who make them possible.

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Customer Reviews

In *The Sorcerers and Their Apprentices*, David Moss offers a first hand tour of the legendary MIT Media Lab, a place where remarkable innovations occur almost continuously. The book is a bit of a jumble rather than a single coherent narrative, but that is appropriate since the Media Lab is all about bringing brilliant people from different disciplines together and letting ideas collide randomly in a "boundary-less" environment. Moss, who served as the Media Lab's director starting in 2006, focuses on the researchers in the Lab and how they collaborate on a variety of projects, ranging from new ways to interact with computers, technologies to assist the disabled and the elderly, new forms of transportation and, especially, robotics. One thing that really comes through is the Media Lab's leading-edge research into artificial intelligence and robotics. The social robots under development are able to interact and learn from people, and can even respond to specific human attitudes and emotions based on facial expressions and other hints. Moss is extremely bullish about the future of robotics, writing that he expects "truly capable robots that can be sold at prices on the order of notebook computers," and that by the end of this decade there may be "more than a billion robots" deployed world-wide. While Moss talks about robots and AI being primarily deployed in the home or in health care settings, there is little doubt that these technologies are going to have a huge impact in workplaces, on the job market and on the overall economy and society. Very few people seem to be tuned into the coming wave of innovation. The technologies under development at the Media Lab have the potential to be truly transformative, and the impact will be felt by all of us.

Dr. Frank Moss, the Director of MIT's Media Lab between 2006 and 2011 presents a remarkable,

yet human view of one of the nation's treasure laboratories. The Media Lab is a Special Projects Laboratory and Educational Division within the MIT School of Architecture and Planning that focuses on Technology, Design and New Media. Its amazing projects and demonstrations have resulted in such products as E-Ink (the paper-like display which make E-Readers like the Kindlereadable), the One Laptop per Child XO laptop, and the Guitar Hero gaming platform. Frank Moss describes and humanizes the research and demonstration process of this remarkable academic laboratory where the motto is "Demo or Die" rather than "Publish or Perish". He describes the technologies, designs and human problems which continue to lead their innovation. Most importantly he profiles in human depth the talented Professors, Graduate Students, Researchers and Corporate Partners who make this innovation possible. A remarkable book about a remarkable place.--Ira Laefsky

This book really could be accurately described using the old cliché "Stranger than fiction". It reminds me of several other books that I have read along the same line (e.g. The Cuckoo's Egg and Nerds, A Brief History of the Internet). There are a number of stories in this book about the amazing developments wrought by the assorted members of the MIT Media Lab. They are not all engineers as one might think, but an amazing cross section of talents and education backgrounds. Together these people have developed a number of things that has and probably will continue to make life much better for many in the population. Their work in the area of helping disabled people to follow their dreams even though their disabilities would normally have denied them that opportunity is amazing. The stories of the developments of these inventors is so varied, I can only suggest that you read this wonderful book. It is about a team of very driven, enthusiastic and imaginative individuals who give their diverse talents to the team effort to invent products and processes that possibly would not happen in a non-team environment.

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