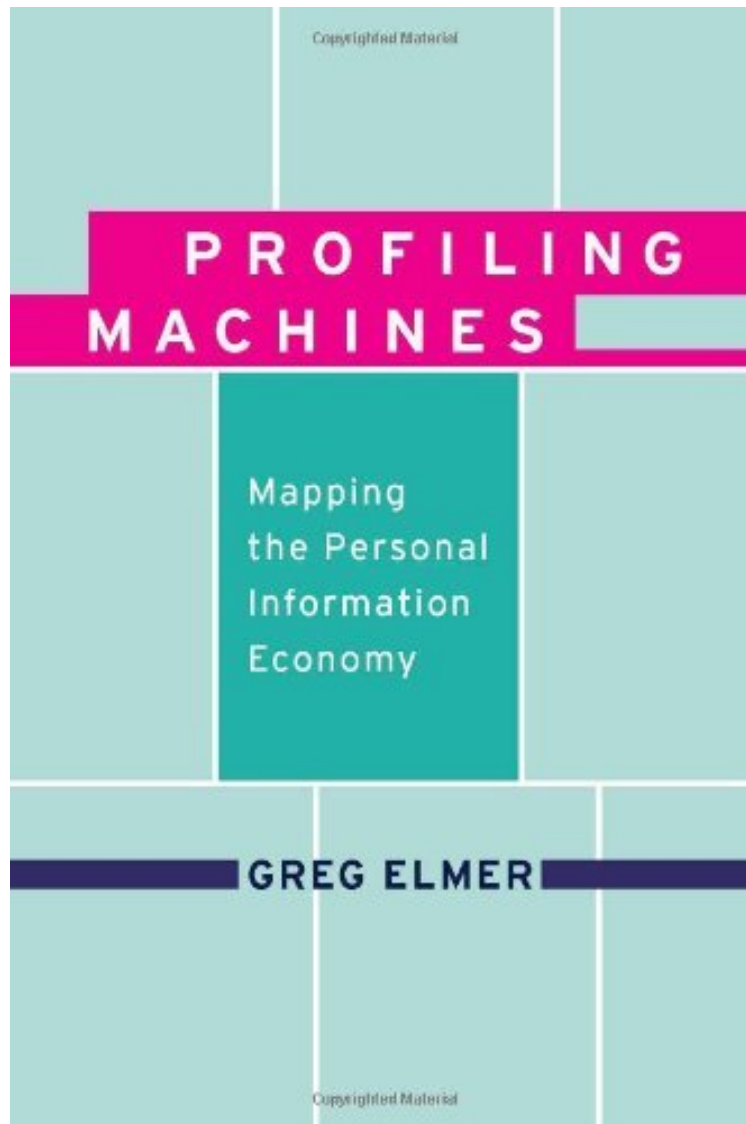


Profiling Machines: Mapping the Personal Information Economy

Greg Elmer

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Greg Elmer : Profiling Machines: Mapping the Personal Information Economy before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Profiling Machines: Mapping the Personal Information Economy:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Packed With Knowledge!By Rolf DobelliGreg Elmer pulls the veil off the universal practice of consumer profiling and data-collection, and demonstrates its deep societal influence. Daily, when you swipe a credit card or buy a magazine or go online, your personal habits are monitored - and someone will use that information to make a buck. Both in terms of its topic and its treatment, this book should be too theoretical to hold much interest for the business public. Who cares about communications theory as applied to the

continual mapping of personal consumer information? However, you can't push this into a dusty corner, because the subtle cultural effect of the increasingly close monitoring and data mining of consumer behavior is too powerful to overlook. While the book has a slightly dry, academic direction, we still strongly recommend it to those who are curious whether the juggernaut economic machine will steamroll over the privacy rights of those who use and feed it. 1 of 4 people found the following review helpful. mapping the machine By Leland Elmer is a good writer and innovative thinker. He provides the reader with provocative insights on a subject little considered but worthy of greater attention.

In this book Greg Elmer brings the perspectives of cultural and media studies to the subject of consumer profiling and feedback technology in the digital economy. He examines the multiplicity of processes that monitor consumers and automatically collect, store, and cross-reference personal information. When we buy a book at Amazon.com or a kayak from L.L. Bean, our transactions are recorded, stored, and deployed to forecast our future behavior--thus we may receive solicitations to buy another book by the same author or the latest in kayaking gear. Elmer charts this process, explaining the technologies that make it possible and examining the social and political implications. Elmer begins by establishing a theoretical framework for his discussion, proposing a "diagrammatic approach" that draws on but questions Foucault's theory of surveillance. In the second part of the book, he presents the historical background of the technology of consumer profiling, including such pre-electronic tools as the census and the warranty card, and describes the software and technology in use today for demographic mapping. In the third part, he looks at two case studies--a marketing event sponsored by Molson that was held in the Canadian Arctic (contrasting the attendees and the indigenous inhabitants) and the use of "cookies" to collect personal information on the World Wide Web, which (along with other similar technologies) automate the process of information collection and cross-referencing. Elmer concludes by considering the politics of profiling, arguing that we must begin to question our everyday electronic routines.

An important study of how consumers are tracked and solicited in the new information economy. Drawing on Deleuze's concept of control societies, Elmer introduces a much needed update of the literature on surveillance to account for profiling and datamining technologies, and, most crucially, maps out potential spaces of resistance. (William C. Bogard, Professor of Sociology, Whitman College) Elmer's study of profiling zeroes in on a key aspect of modern media spaces. He takes us beyond the study of texts and contexts to look at the forms of linkage and feedback that media regimes use to define and delimit the role of the consumer and the citizen. This is a great book for anybody trying to puzzle out how media, technology, power, and subjectivity function in the contemporary world. (McKenzie Wark, New School University) Greg Elmer has produced a lucid and concise analysis of the panoptic information society. Profiling Machines makes a very important contribution to what is now a critical agenda in contemporary cultural and political debate. (Kevin Robins, Goldsmiths College, University of London) In a world increasingly networked, automated, and invisibly connected, Greg Elmer's Profiling Machines is a health alert, a political prophecy, and an ethical challenge. Forget the surveillance state: data mining, cookies, and personal profiling are the tools of increasingly powerful global commercial corporations. Somehow we always thought the Web would combine anonymity with the right to become truly individual. Elmer shows how the erosion of anonymity has turned us into economic and lifestyle data sets, traded without our even knowing it. Thoroughly researched, passionately argued, this is a bracing account of the ethics, aesthetics, and likely futures of the web that should be read by everyone who has ever surfed, as well as every student of public relations and marketing. (Sean Cubitt, Professor of Screen and Media Studies, University of Waikato, New Zealand) About the Author Greg Elmer is Associate Professor of Communications at Florida State University. He is the editor of Critical Perspectives on the Internet and co-editor of the journal Space and Culture.