Raul Trejo Delarbre
La Nueva Alfombra Magica: Usos y Mitos de Internet, la Red de Redes (The New Magic Carpet: Uses and Myths of the Internet, the Network of Networks)
Madrid: FUNDESCO (Fundacion para el Desarrollo de la Funcion Social de las Comunicaciones), 1996.
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There are now hundreds of thousands of Web sites in Latin America. You can read the news from any one of many daily newspapers, get on-the-site reports of the destruction from Hurricane Mitch, locate scholarly research conducted at Latin American universities or simply follow your favorite soccer team. Regional networks have been appearing at a rapid rate since the early 90's and "some [of these] ... have had the highest rates of growth worldwide" (Hahn, p. 58). Just as in the United States these networks serve to disseminate information about every sector of the economy and society. The most active Internet nations in Latin America include Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, Venezuela, and Uruguay. A quick visit to such mega-Web sites as: http://lanic.utexas.edu:80 (UT-LANIC), http://ekeko.ncp.net.mx (Red Cientifica Peruana) or http://www.rr.net.mx (Red Tecnologica Nacional, Mexico) can lead the intrepid Web explorer into a multi-lingual Latin American-based world of information.

But are the issues facing Internet development in Latin America any different from those addressed in the developing world? Mr. Trejo Delarbre's book, La Nueva Alfombra Magica, thinks so. The book is a guide, not to individual Web sites, but to the political, social, cultural and economic issues inherent in the Internet and its potential and application in developing countries. The book is an excellent synthesis of the work of scholars and Internet theorists, citing sources as diverse as Nicholas Negroponte, Herbert Schiller, Armand Mattelart, Ed Krol, Robert Reich and Stewart Brand. Trejo Delarbre weaves this with Latin American theorists and practitioners including Jose Soriano (Peru) and combines it with examples from Mexico and other Latin American countries as well as the European Community. Don't be thrown by the publication date, although it was written in 1996, the theoretical background and framework is still quite applicable and identifies areas for further discussion that are infrequently mentioned in much of the English-language literature.

Treh Delarbre is a faculty member and researcher at the Institute for Social Research at the National Autonomous University in Mexico (UNAM) and received the FUNDESCO Essay Prize for this work in 1995 (Premio FUNDESCO de Ensayo, Spain). Using Vnod K. Jain's image of the Internet as Aladdin's magic carpet, Trejo Delarbre views the Internet as a combination of discovery, emotion and adventure and his work attempts to address the risks and challenges within. The book is divided into five chapters:

1. Internet Globalization
2. New Realities: A Cyberspace Profile
3. New Challenges
4. State and Liberalization
5. What to do with the Networks

The opening chapters of the book cover territory familiar to most, as Trejo Delarbre identifies uses of the Internet in developing countries, e.g., distance education, entertainment, academic and scientific research, e-mail, e-commerce, telecommuting, listervs and discussion groups, online news services, and political applications. He also raises many of the same issues one would see in any Internet discussion, hackers, copyright, encryption, and evaluation of information, for example.

Even in the "familiar territory" discussion, however, he suggests themes particular to Latin America and the developing world and raises the issue of North/South conflict in this context. He introduces early on the possibility that the globalization of the Internet may create new dependencies on the developed world rather than increasing developing countries' autonomy. He raises issues of national sovereignty in the increasing globalization of the Internet and introduces the idea that national and regional information policies are necessary to reduce this risk. He expresses the fear that Latin Americans will be consumers only, rather than providers of information. This may be one aspect in which the book is dated, as the explosion of Latin American resources has partially corrected this assumption.

It is in the latter portions of the book that he discusses issues endemic to the developing world that impact the Internet including: access (information rich v. information poor, lack of telephones, inadequate infrastructure); stratification of social classes; and increasing movement in most Latin American countries towards privatization and free market economies. While admitting that privatization is currently a prevailing force in much of Latin America, he...
the text-only Lynx browser. This definitely gives a feel for what can and cannot be taken for
mainstream beasts such as Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer, but also
presented come across when viewed from different browsers. She took into consideration not
Towers had the clever idea of showing how well (or not so well) many of the techniques
pictures (and as it would be expected by a visual guide, there are plenty of them throughout
advanced capabilities of the program. I particularly liked the chapters covering Dynamic
of the political, social and cultural issues regarding the development of the Internet, not only for
countries in the developing world but in regard to its growth in the United States and the
developed world in general. - *Lucretia Covert-Vaj* New York University Libraries
It is a fact that the evolution of Web technologies has had a direct effect on the development of
better and more powerful authoring tools. Already the introduction of tables and frames few
years ago meant that manually coding HTML could become tedious, time-consuming and
prone to errors. Implementing sophisticated elements such as Dynamic HTML, JavaScript,
cascading style sheets, time lines or Web Objects would be then unthinkable without
integrated WYSIWYG applications capable of taking care of what happens behind the scene,
while one concentrates on the design and content of the Web site.
Macromedia's Dreamweaver is certainly one of the big boys in this arena and it is not
surprising that the program is complex and the learning curve to master it very steep.
Fortunately Peachpit Press has dedicated one of its Visual Quickstart Guides to version 1.2 for
both MacOS and Windows (as I am writing this, Macromedia has just released version 2.0).
The book claims to teach readers about the program by using graphics rather than lengthy
explanations. Did the author succeed?
The structure of the guide is logical and gradually moves from the basics to the most
set amount of reviews (80 for wide-release movies, 40 for limited-release movies, 20 for TV shows), including 5
reviews from Top Critics. Audience Score. Percentage of users who rate a movie or TV show positively. Fm. 2
granted when designing a Web page. Finally, both table of contents and index are comprehensive and allow to find the desired piece of information fairly quickly.

My real gripe with the book relates to two areas: first the author makes numerous references to a companion Web site, which contains three appendices, covering the Image Map Editor, Dreamweaver’s HTML Roundtrip feature and Browser Compatibility. All together, they represent some 30 pages of very useful information, which I would have preferred to see in the book itself. In fact, I ended up downloading the Acrobat PDF files on the Web site and printed them out. Imagine having to turn on the modem, connect to your favourite ISP and fire up the browser every time you want to consult what the appendix has to say about your particular query... The site is useful, though, for the good selection of external links which illustrate in ‘real life’ the techniques presented.

The second annoyance was in relation to terminology (or computer nomenclature). A few times, Windows conventions were arbitrarily transferred to the Macintosh: what PC users call a “shortcut” is an “alias” in Mac parlance, and to state that the Macintosh version of Dreamweaver is installed in “file:\Macromedia\Dreamweaver\Dreamweaver” can be simply too much for some Mac purists. Try confusing the forward slash with the backward slash when talking to a UNIX head and see what happen. Just a little bit more accuracy could make a major difference.

Despite the last two points, though, this is a very useful and well written guide, indispensable for anyone who wants to get up to speed with Dreamweaver quickly and without having to wade through hundreds and hundreds of pages. - Paolo G. Cordone

Bonnie A. Nardi and Vicki L. O’Day
Information Ecologies: Using Technology with Heart
Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999

Ever since Prometheus, technology has offered both enormous benefits and frustrating troubles. For most of history, technological solutions have been viewed in stark contrasts, as revolutionary advances and as dehumanizing disasters. Bonnie Nardi and Vicki O’Day call for a new attitude to technology in this refreshing book, a decidedly sensitive and caring approach that integrates rather than dissects mechanical solutions to age-old problems.

The heart of this book on “technology with heart” really comes from case studies describing the human use of technology in schools, libraries and communities. These studies - based on the work on Nardi and O’Day in the field - give the book a heavy dose of reality to its healthy message of information gardening and ecology. Like any part-time gardener, we all recognize the value of weeding, planting and watering; information and technology require the same sort of care and understanding, argue Nardi and O’Day.

Opening with excerpts from Fritz Lang’s masterful classic Metropolis this book uses Lang’s message - found in the characters of Rotwang and the human and robotic "versions" of Maria - as a theme. There indeed is “a new future in which the minds that plan and the hands that work do not live in separate world, but are mediated by the human heart.” Repeatedly by example and the strength of argument, Nardi and O’Day point out the logic of this future where human nature and machine work together, rather than in opposition.

If you read only one book this year on computing, make it this one. Nardi and O’Day’s arguments and case studies will give you plenty of food for thought in this quite remarkable analysis of technology at the end of the century. - ejv

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