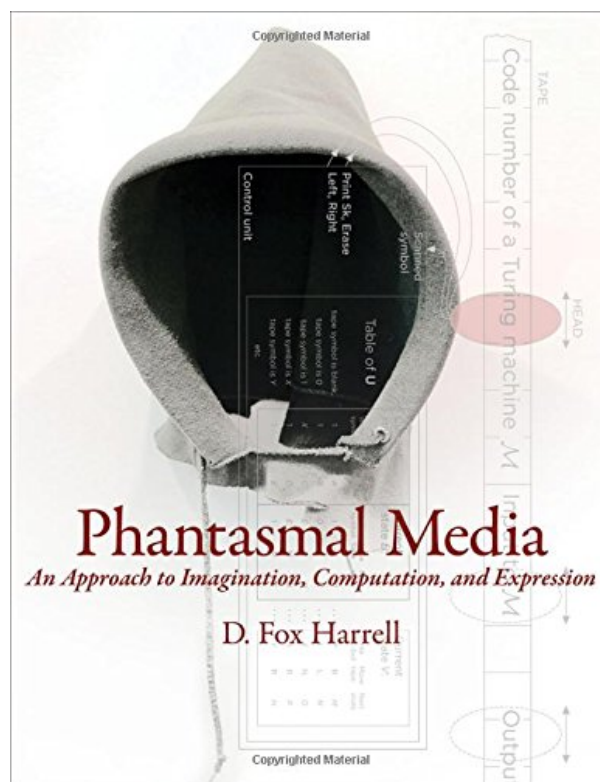
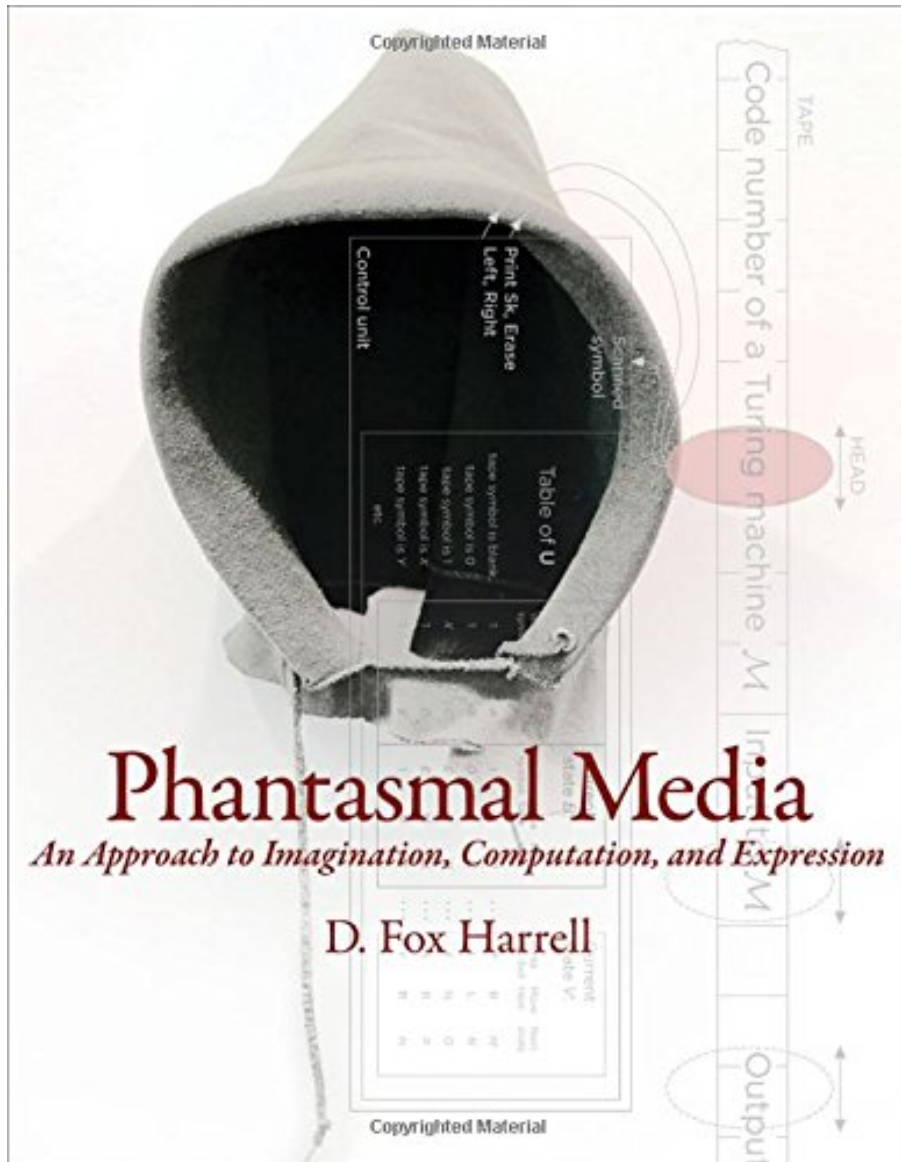


PHANTASMAL MEDIA: AN APPROACH TO IMAGINATION, COMPUTATION, AND EXPRESSION (MIT PRESS) BY D. FOX HARRELL



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Review

D. Fox Harrell is the leading scientist of the human mind in the digital age. Phantasmal Media is a major advance in the study of the human imagination. Harrell's brilliance, learning, wit, and charm make it a great pleasure to read.

(Mark Turner, Institute Professor and Professor of Cognitive Science, Case Western Reserve University)

Fox Harrell's bold and audacious view of the relationship between computing and the imagination blends a very broad range of multicultural references with perspectives from the sciences, humanities, and arts to present an unprecedented vision of how people and machines can come together to forge not only new software systems, but a new ethics and politics of the human condition. This is what a groundbreaking book looks like.

(George E. Lewis, Columbia University)

Deftly operating at the productive intersection of computational design, cognitive science, and expressive media, Phantasmal Media draws attention to the profound involvement of human imagination in the encounter with information technology. In doing so, it provides a new basis for understanding human-computer interaction and artificial intelligence, one that places ideation and ideology at the center and, in doing so, profoundly troubles questions of representation and agency at the heart of computational practice. It is inspiring, intriguing, and, yes, haunting.

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many forms of digital media that prompt these images in users, and then building computing systems -- seen in video games, social media, e-commerce sites, or computer-based artwork -- with enough adaptability to let designers and users express a wide range of cultural preferences, rather than being locked into pre-existing options.

(MIT news)

...profoundly ambitious and wildly eclectic Phantasmal Media will likely find a wide audience among artists and technologists alike.

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PHANTASMAL MEDIA: AN APPROACH TO IMAGINATION, COMPUTATION, AND EXPRESSION (MIT PRESS) BY D. FOX HARRELL PDF

In *Phantasmal Media*, D. Fox Harrell considers the expressive power of computational media. He argues, forcefully and persuasively, that the great expressive potential of computational media comes from the ability to construct and reveal phantasms -- blends of cultural ideas and sensory imagination. These ubiquitous and often-unseen phantasms -- cognitive phenomena that include sense of self, metaphors, social categories, narrative, and poetic thinking -- influence almost all our everyday experiences. Harrell offers an approach for understanding and designing computational systems that have the power to evoke these phantasms, paying special attention to the exposure of oppressive phantasms and the creation of empowering ones. He argues for the importance of cultural content, diverse worldviews, and social values in computing. The expressive power of phantasms is not purely aesthetic, he contends; phantasmal media can express and construct the types of meaning central to the human condition.

Harrell discusses, among other topics, the phantasm as an orienting perspective for developers; expressive epistemologies, or data structures based on subjective human worldviews; morphic semiotics (building on the computer scientist Joseph Goguen's theory of algebraic semiotics); cultural phantasms that influence consensus and reveal other perspectives; computing systems based on cultural models; interaction and expression; and the ways that real-world information is mapped onto, and instantiated by, computational data structures.

The concept of phantasmal media, Harrell argues, offers new possibilities for using the computer to understand and improve the human condition through the human capacity to imagine.

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Fox Harrell's bold and audacious view of the relationship between computing and the imagination blends a very broad range of multicultural references with perspectives from the sciences, humanities, and arts to present an unprecedented vision of how people and machines can come together to forge not only new software systems, but a new ethics and politics of the human condition. This is what a groundbreaking book looks like.

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(John Harwood Artforum)

About the Author

D. Fox Harrell is Associate Professor of Digital Media at MIT.

Most helpful customer reviews

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Transformative guide to thinking about digital media

By C. Lim

Phantasmal Media is a book that I wish existed several years ago. It introduces and describes an approach to understanding, designing, and implementing digital media systems in an structured way. It helps define previously deemed subjective notions in the aspects of aesthetics and play in a formal, yet extremely accessible way. The notions of phantasms and the use of semiotics to capture the imaginative processes is a breakthrough approach in understanding these processes for me. *Phantasmal Media* is full of wonderfully applicable examples, and D. Fox Harrell goes into extreme lengths to ensure that chapters are packed with images, textual descriptions, and thorough explanations to convey the theories across to readers across all disciplines.

For anyone working or interested working with digital media, Phantasmal Media provides an excellent and deep to structure your thought processes, designs, implementations, execution, and analysis. It is highly relevant and practical, especially in today's world.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Transformative, empowering, fresh!

By K. Stein

This book provides an framework for understanding digital media in an astoundingly new and fresh way. It is solidly grounded in multiple disciplines, uses illuminating examples, and is beautifully (and practically) designed. I found the book to be accessible while being conceptually and technically deep. The book is transformative. Refreshingly neither utopian or dystopian in its ideas on technology and culture, "Phantasmal Media" eloquently suggests how computer can be used to improve society.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Phantasmal Media

By Dominic Kao

Phantasmal Media is thought-provoking and highly relevant to contemporary culture. The prose is deeply-layered in a beautifully designed book. Most important of all, Phantasmal Media will transform the way you look at media in all its varied forms, as Harrell journeys in transcending meaning and intent that is so often overlooked. The salient examples spanning film, digital games, albums, even symbols we see every single day, are thoughtfully constructed in theories bridging technical disciplines (e.g., computer science, mathematics) to more subjective ones (e.g., cognitive science, media studies, sociolinguistics). This masterfully written book is useful for researchers, students, even non-scholars for broadening worldviews and the powerful notion of phantasms.

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