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Virtual Reality

By Howard Rheingold



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Imagine being able to "walk" into your computer and interact with any program you create. It sounds like science fiction, but it's science fact. Surgeons now rehearse operations on computer-generated "virtual" patients, and architects "walk through" virtual buildings while the actual structures are still in blueprints. In *Virtual Reality*, Howard Rheingold takes us to the front lines of this revolutionary new technology that creates computer-generated worlds complete with the sensations of touch and motion, and explores its impact on everything from entertainment to particle physics.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Reingold, coauthor of *Cognitive Connection*, contends that VR technology will replace artificial intelligence as computing's cybernetic frontier. Current reports from Japanese and French VR labs call up ghosts of the development of the VCR and PC: technologies blazed by American inventiveness but paved to commercial success by countries with coherent industrial policies. Reingold's attempt to impart, in sentences of almost 100 words, a VR vision of his experiences in the "cybernetic sandbox" will mean little to readers unfamiliar with the programming problems of VR. Neologisms like "metaplay" and "teledildontics" (sex in a bed of VR) seem like carny-barker teasers, trivializing potential VR applications in engineering, medicine and education. A more linear approach to the topic might have better fit Reingold's purposes.

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From Library Journal

The term "virtual reality" describes the computer-generated simulation of reality with physical, tactile, and visual dimensions. This interactive technology is used by science and engineering researchers as well as by the entertainment industry, especially in the form of video games. In this book, Rheingold, editor of *Whole Earth Review*, reports on his visits to virtual reality labs in industry and universities around the world. He describes the eerie experience of using virtual reality systems that can simulate a walk-through of a building in an architectural graphics program, interviews leading researchers, and speculates on the social and psychological implications of this technology, in which the artificial world overlaps with reality. He also highlights the aims of system designers and gives a good sense of the exploratory nature of this research. Recommended for popular technology and science collections.

- *Christopher Jocius, Illinois Mathematics & Science Acad., Aurora*

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From the Publisher

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