

**Schneier on Security**

Bruce Schneier  
 Wiley  
 ISBN 978-0-470-39535-6  
**£19.99**  
**Rating: 10/10**



This has to be one of the most interesting, absorbing books I have read in a long time. Bruce Schneier, undoubtedly the world's leading expert on the subject, presents this remarkable collection of essays on computer security. The book divides the collection of essays into 12 chapters on topics ranging from national security policy and privacy to economics and psychology.

It is refreshing to see a commonsense perspective on technological and security matters. Schneier sets the scene right from the start in an introduction to say 'all security involves trade-offs'. The theme cuts across the various domains covered by the essays in the entire book and in fact presents a very practical guiding principle for security researchers and practitioners.

Chapter 8 on the economics of security is my favourite. It covers an exciting intersection between the two disciplines, economics and information security, which explains why economic motivation is important if security is to improve.

The author's writing style is captivating. Every essay is succinct, mostly focusing on a problem and bringing out the often subtle issues immediately. The author manages to express complex ideas in simple words and draws clear conclusions at the end of every essay.

For those teaching the subject, this book is full of interesting case studies and discussions to be shared amongst students. I would recommend bringing in such insightful perspectives into the curriculum.

Think of this book as a form of Schneier's vast experience and intelligence distilled into little chunks of wisdom each conveying the message simply one by one. This is priceless.

**Siraj A. Shaikh MBCS**

**A Computer in the Art Room**

Catherine Mason  
 JJC  
 ISBN 978-1-899163-89-2  
**£25.00**  
**Rating: 10/10**



This book really is a hidden gem. Written as a definitive guide, the book gives a detailed insight into the collaboration of art and cybernetics in Britain from the 1950s to the 1980s. With a historical focus, the author concentrates initially on the growth of the avant-garde artistic movement and the early computer industry, then moves on to give a fascinating view of the artists who took the technology of the time and consistently pushed the limits to produce the artworks they envisaged.

The narrative contrasts the difference between the conservative computer science establishment and the difficulties faced by pioneering artists who learned not only to use the computers of the time, but to write

their own code and even build their own equipment, paving the way for the computer graphics industry as we know it today. As a computer history archive, the book is extremely detailed. With over 140 photographs and highly detailed research, the book is beautifully put together by an author who is clearly a leading authority on this branch of art.

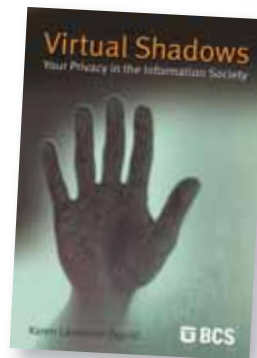
Computer history aficionados will find this book fascinating, as the book covers many early computing systems and the software used to drive them, from the earliest teletype machines through to the ATLAS mainframe and Altair micro-computers.

This book will appeal to educationalists and art historians, as well as IT professionals. It is very well written and includes detailed biographical narratives of the leading figures in computer art development in Britain. I strongly recommend the book to anyone with an interest in computing history, whether interested in art or not.

**James Poxon MBCS CITP**

**Virtual Shadows**

Karen Lawrence Oqvist  
 BCS  
 ISBN 978-1-906124-09-0  
**£14.95**  
**Rating: 9/10**



This book is as suitable for a general audience as much as for information security or web professionals and is written in a very readable style. We are introduced to the concepts behind social networking and web 2.0 and their impact on our privacy and everyday lives. In this respect the author is as concerned with social science as much as computer science. We start with an explanation of social networking, blogs and web 2.0. This reflects the author's main interests, devoting most of its pages to blogging, rather than social networking sites.

The book then moves on to the connections between an individual's online life and physical life discussing the impact that blog and social network postings can have on career and reputation both now and many years from now.

We are reminded that once we place information in the public domain it remains there permanently. As it's possible for

someone's opinions as a 15-year-old to have drastically changed by adulthood, the presence of a permanent reminder on the web can cause embarrassment in later life, or even have potentially serious effects on employment prospects.

Good advice is given on maintaining some separation between work colleagues, online friends and real-life friends and limiting information available to different types of Facebook friend.

There is a discussion of children's activities online with sound advice on how to avoid and deal with cyber-bullying, although it's debatable how many older children would be prepared to share their passwords and browsing history with their parents.

The final section is a sobering discussion of recent trends in information gathering and usage which highlights both the potential risks and possible advantages in the amount and type of information being gathered and used by governments and private entities.

In general, the book is very readable and provides a balanced view of the issues. The discussions of how and why we willingly share our data and the way it gets used are well informed and interesting.

**Nick Dunn**