Inventing the Medium: Principles of Interaction Design as a Cultural Practice (MIT Press)

By Janet H. Murray

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Digital artifacts from iPads to databases pervade our lives, and the design decisions that shape them affect how we think, act, communicate, and understand the world. But the pace of change has been so rapid that technical innovation is outstripping design. Interactors are often mystified and frustrated by their enticing but confusing new devices; meanwhile, product design teams struggle to articulate shared and enduring design goals. With *Inventing the Medium*, Janet Murray provides a unified vocabulary and a common methodology for the design of digital objects and environments. It will be an essential guide for both students and practitioners in this evolving field.

Murray explains that innovative interaction designers should think of all objects made with bits -- whether games or Web pages, robots or the latest killer apps -- as belonging to a single new medium: the digital medium. Designers can speed the process of useful and lasting innovation by focusing on the collective cultural task of inventing this new medium. Exploring strategies for maximizing the expressive power of digital artifacts, Murray identifies and examines four representational affordances of digital environments that provide the core palette for designers across applications: computational procedures, user participation, navigable space, and encyclopedic capacity.

Each chapter includes a set of Design Explorations -- creative exercises for students and thought experiments for practitioners -- that allow readers to apply the ideas in the chapter to particular design problems. *Inventing the Medium* also provides more than 200 illustrations of specific design strategies drawn from multiple genres and platforms and a glossary of design concepts.

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Editorial Review

Review

Inventing the Medium gathers humanistic insights from Murray's pioneering scholarship, demonstrates how they apply to a wide range of digital design problems, and invites readers to begin using these conceptual tools themselves in an engaging and broadly accessible manner. I've already seen it have a powerful impact on my students.

(**Noah Wardrip-Fruin**, Computer Science Department, University of California, Santa Cruz; author of *Expressive Processing*)

Janet Murray has built a practical theory of digital design that centers around the four affordances of networked media: encyclopedic, spatial, procedural, and participatory. Asserting that successful design endeavors are human-centered and help shape the medium, Murray asserts that design is ethical and aesthetic as well as instrumental. There is no book quite like this. Students and educators are sure to embrace it.

(**Ellen Lupton**, curator of contemporary design, Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, and author of *Thinking with Type*)

Inventing the Medium is an epic accomplishment, one which we will all be mining for years to come.

(**Henry Jenkins**, *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*)

This fascinating book...I suspect will become something of a 'Bible' of interaction design. Certainly, anyone who is at all serious about designing Websites, whether they be personal home pages, library Websites, digital libraries, or electronic journals should have this on their desks as a constant source of ideas and stimulation.

(**Professor Tom Wilson**, Editor-in-Chief *Information Research*)

Inventing the Medium might be considered a 'Swiss army knife' for interaction design.

(*Choice*)

About the Author

Janet H. Murray is Ivan Allen College Dean's Recognition Professor of Digital Media and Director of the Experimental Television Lab at Georgia Institute of Technology. She is the author of Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace (MIT Press, 1998). In 2010, Prospect Magazine designated her "one of the top ten brains of the digital future."

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Kenneth Sigler:

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