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Reflection Two

Designing for Emerging Technologies

A disruptive technology is one whose sphere of influence extends into a range of life -- including social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental entities. Disruptive technologies seem to be most provoking not when they are new but when their use becomes habitual and part of the every day. With emergent technologies like the Internet of Things, robotics, and synthetic biology designers inherit a responsibility of imagining futures, and guiding the implementations of these technologies with users around the world. With all emergent disruptive technologies, including the the aforementioned categories, no longer will advancement be about simply enhancing and accelerating our current systems, but rather completely remaking and formulating new possibilities. Disruptive emergent technology reimagines rather than upgrades.

As designers it is important to forecast the realization of disruptive technologies and not restrain oneself to designing for what is only seen as being possible today. This is where the importance of prototyping comes into play and ensuring that a design can align itself to a constantly updating iterative process in a world that is constantly in motion. Jonathan Follett, in the text, outlines eight tenants for emerging technology aimed to steer designers towards a concretized path to design for technologies yet to be fully developed and implemented into society. The first point is to “Identify the Problems Correctly”. This deals with the notion scanning the environment and focusing on trends--the key for this point is awareness. The second point is “Learn Constantly” and delves into ideas of understanding the technology and its implications around us both at a technical and skill based level--and s sociological level where the focus is the effect on the people the technology is meant to serve. The third tenant is to “Think Systematically” and outlines the importance of systems and learning about how each technology works together in unison rather than an isolated unit. The Fifth tenant is to “Work at a Variety of Scales” and goes back to the idea of prototyping where the development of technology is an iterative process where problems can be found early in its development. The fifth point is “Connect People and Technology” and outlines the importance of how humans interface with technology--being almost more important or equally important as the raw technology itself. The sixth, seventh, and eighth points are to “Provoke and Facilitate Change”, “Work Effectively on Cross-Disciplinary Teams”, and “Take Risks Responsibly”-- respectively. [Follett]. Firstly, this idea of proking and facilitating change revolves around engaging with systems that may be not working correctly and propose alterations to completely reinvent the system itself if necessary. It is the designers job to use the emergent technology in a way that can transform and provoke change. The next area focuses on the importance of disciplinary skillsets in a world where there is so much crossover between fields. And finally, to take risks responsibly involves understanding the social, and economic advantages and disadvantages of embarking on the development of a new technology or product.

Follett, Jonathan. Designing for emerging technologies: UX for genomics, robotics, and the Internet of things. OReilly, 2015.