Higher Education in the Digital Age: Technology Issues and Strategies for American Colleges and Universities

James J. Duderstadt, Daniel E. Atkins, and Douglas Van Houweling
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Reviewed by Brian L. Hawkins

James J. Duderstadt, Daniel E. Atkins, and Douglas Van Houweling clearly state their intent in the Preface of *Higher Education in the Digital Age: Technology Issues and Strategies for American Colleges and Universities*: "To assist colleges and universities and their various stake-holders in responding to the challenges and opportunities presented by digital technology in a way that strengthens and enhances those traditional roles of higher education so important to our society." The authors are certainly well-qualified to offer such assistance. The three were the key architects of the University of Michigan's rise through much of the 1990s to a position of national prominence in its use of technology and in its integration of technology throughout the institution. Duderstadt was president, Van Houweling was vice provost for information technology, and Atkins was the founding dean of the School of Information Studies at the university. In this book, these three nationally known figures present both a comprehensive look backward into the history and impact of technology on our campuses and a look forward to potential implications and future impacts.

The first two chapters set the context, examining the general higher education milieu and the context of technological change over the past couple of decades, and then offering projections for the future. The next four chapters explore contextual changes and the impact of information technology on (1) the fundamental activities (teaching, scholarship, and public service) of the university; (2) the organization, management, and financing of the university; and (3) the broader higher education enterprise. The authors interject interesting and relevant examples and projects—implemented at the University of Michigan during their tenure—that are applicable to the kinds of impacts and responses common in higher education.

In the four chapters of the third and final part of this book, the authors turn to recommendations and strategies, taking the contextual information presented and providing guidance and direction to campuses for navigating this new, digitally transformed higher education enterprise. The authors provide a variety of assumptions on which they base their predictions and advice, turning then to an examination of institutional strategies. They also examine and provide thoughts about navigating the new market forces affecting higher education, and they explore the policy and philosophical implications that all of this has for a democratic society and American higher education.

In the concluding chapter—on the future of the university in the digital age—the authors weave together the many threads developed throughout the book. Interestingly, the authors themselves qualify their definition of the "future." As they explain, changes can be anticipated and visions imagined for the near term, meaning within the next decade. But for the longer term (two decades and beyond), "all bets are off." Readers hoping for longer-term predictions should search elsewhere; this book leaves such speculation to the futurists and science fiction writers.
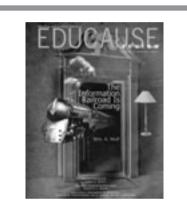
These last four chapters raise critical and thought-provoking questions that all campuses should be engaged in discussing as they plan for the future. Written from and for the perspective of college and university leaders, *Higher Education in the Digital Age* offers key conclusions, a policy framework, and an action agenda. Many of the issues presented by Duderstadt, Atkins, and Van Houweling involve "out-of-the-box" thinking that challenges us to rethink the future of our campuses given the impact technology is likely to have (and is already having!). The questions raised, issues noted, and strategies recommended should be read and debated by everyone concerned with higher education—leaders and followers, teachers and learners, those at large institutions and small.

This book, especially the last four chapters, is a must read for any senior administrator in higher education today. The technology-enabled accessibility of information and knowledge is leading to a "profoundly democratic revolution that should involve us all." This book shows why it *will* involve us all.

For more information, visit the Web site <http://www.greenwood.com>. *e*

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