FEATURED TITLES         AUGUST 2015

Smarter Than You Think: How Technology Is Changing Our Minds for the Better
By: Thompson, Clive
TS8.5 .T498 2014

Review from: Choice       February 01, 2014
Smarter than You Think explores the spectrum of how people use and rely on computers, ranging from routine usage to recording all life experiences via video and wearable computers ("life-loggers"). In contrast to Nicholas Carr's assertions in The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains (CH, Nov'10, 48-1521), Thompson (journalist) argues that it is too early to state with any certainty how computer reliance affects neurology. Thompson compares concerns about adverse effects of computer usage with similar aversions to new media. For example, Socrates was concerned about the increased use of the written word. In more recent times, people had concerns about film and moving images. The fear is that new media will squelch memory, creativity, and ultimately intelligence...

Stuff Matters: Exploring the Marvelous Materials That Shape Our Man-Made World
By: Miodownik, Mark
TA403.2 .M56 2014

Review from: Choice       December 01, 2014
Inventories of failure emerge with each catastrophe, alerting people to not take materials for granted: Challenger fell from the sky, and the World Trade Center collapsed. The Mianus River bridge disappeared into darkness and cars and trucks followed, and the fuselage on the British Comet failed. Tires wear out, blow out, and peel off. Meanwhile, people's skin loses elasticity and slowly wrinkles because of the long-term effects of gravity. Human life depends on materials that support and sustain, protect, and provide for it. As the title indicates, stuff does matter! Nowhere has that message been better written or with more style and charm than by Miodownik (materials science, Univ. College London, UK)...

The Natural Gas Revolution: At the Pivot of the World's Energy Future
By: Kolb, Robert W.
TN880 .K53 2014

Review from: Choice       February 01, 2014
The twin innovations of hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" and horizontal drilling have helped unlock vast amounts of oil and gas that were hitherto inaccessible because they were trapped in deep strata of shale and other sedimentary rocks. This unlocking has given rise to a veritable natural gas revolution. Therefore, this book's objective is to explain the implications of this revolution for the economies of the US and a select group of nations that either are or soon will be major players in global natural gas markets. Kolb (Loyola Univ. Chicago) reports that because of the discoveries of vast quantities of shale gas, it is now possible to think of the US as an energy exporter and as a nation that might achieve energy independence...

Build It, Make It, Do It, Play It!: Subject Access to the Best How-To Guides for Children and Teens
By: Bomhold, Catharine R. and Terri E. Elder
Z6151 .B66 2014

Review from: Voice of Youth Advocates       December 01, 2014
A compilation of print and electronic sources of activities for children from lower elementary to high school, this guide skims the highlights of hands-on projects. Coverage in the subject index and text includes the arts (origami, drawing), science (bees, optics), physical education (judo, fitness), crafts (duct tape, scrapbooks, balloons), holiday arts (Thanksgiving, pumpkins), food (cupcakes, sandwiches), and Internet surfing. Specific topics range from ancient Egypt, fingernails, camouflage, reggae, and catfish to pirates, science fair projects, and general how-to. Each entry summarizes author, title, date, ISBN, pages, series, grade level, and contents...

The Marshmallow Test: Mastering Self-Control
By: Mischel, Walter
BF632 .M57 2014

Review from: Library Journal       September 15, 2014
World-renowned psychologist Mischel's (Niven Professor of Humane Letters in Psychology, Columbia Univ.; coauthor, Introduction to Personality) latest work on self-control answers questions such as: Why do smart people do dumb things? Through a series of experiments (including the famed Marshmallow Test) conducted in a variety of settings, Mischel discovered that self-control can take different forms depending on the person. How can a politician have the self-discipline to make it through law school but give in to the temptation of a White House intern? According to Mischel, "self-control is an ability that can or cannot be used depending on motivation to use it." So how do we gain more of this ability, and why should we? Mischel lays out techniques such as if-then plans, self-distancing, and systematic desensitization as ways to delay gratification...
Independence: The Tangled Roots of the American Revolution
By: Slaughter, Thomas P.
E210 .S58 2014

Review from: Choice November 01, 2014
The American Revolution resulted from a complexity of factors, mostly pointing to the rising maturity of the colonies and a long history of conflicts among the colonists themselves and those straining the imperial relationship. The home government lacked the understanding of colonial situations and the potentiality of consequences. Slaughter (Univ. of Rochester) serves up a warmed-over smorgasbord of about every significant Colonial event from the early 17th century onward to early 1776. He has little to suggest of broader meanings, and readers get only a slight feel of the societal context. Toward the end of the book, the author skims over the role of Virginia and the South in general...

Washed Away: How the Great Flood of 1913, America’s Most Widespread Natural Disaster, Terrorized a Nation and Changed It Forever
By: Williams, Geoffrey
GB1399.3 .W55 2013

Review from: Booklist February 01, 2013
Of the major natural catastrophes of the early twentieth century, the Great Flood of 1913 is one of the least remembered. Over several days in March of that year, heavy rains with fierce winds and tornadoes caused severe flooding in 14 states. Before the storm abated, rain turned to snow. Every major river east of the Mississippi rose, many bridges washed away, and fallen telegraph and telephone lines isolated towns and cities in need of outside help. Hundreds of people died between Nebraska and Vermont from drowning, fires, freezing temperatures, accidents, and suicide. Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania were the hardest-hit states. Williams weaves tragic and heroic stories of people in the various affected states into an almost hour-by-hour account of the deadly storm...

Old Man River: The Mississippi River in North American History
By: Schneider, Paul
F351 .S345 2013

Review from: Library Journal March 15, 2014
Schneider (Brutal Journey) uses the story of the Mississippi River as a springboard to share America’s history. From mammoths to murderers to Civil War mayhem, the author successfully weaves past and present to highlight myths and legends of American culture. Native Americans, explorers, steamboats, and commerce have all contributed to the river’s significance. Well read by Alan Skylar, the work warns that the watershed’s future is at risk because of human intervention on the river. Schneider interweaves tales from the past with his current observations from kayaking trips on the Mississippi, the world’s busiest waterway, and its tributaries.

Economics: The User’s Guide
By: Chang, Ha-Joon
HB171 .C484 2014

Review from: Booklist July 01, 2014
Chang, economist and academic, presents his introduction to economics for all responsible citizens claiming they need to learn some economics, and he offers them a world view. He sets out to show readers how to think, rather than what to think, about the economy, using many economic theories, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses. The author presents different types of economic arguments in order to teach us how to develop the critical faculty to judge which argument makes the most sense in a given economic situation and in light of moral values and political goals. The author states, the subject matter of economics should be the economy which involves money, work, technology, international trade, taxes and that which relates to ways in which we produce goods and services, distribute the incomes generated in the process and consume the things thus produced...

Shady Characters: The Secret Life of Punctuation, Symbols, and Other Typographical Marks
By: Houston, Keith
P301.5.P86 H68 2013

Review from: Publishers Weekly July 08, 2013
For fans of Lynn Truss’s Eats, Shoots and Leaves, this bestiary of lesser-known punctuation marks is a wonder. Blogger Houston, though a self-admitted amateur in the world of typography, speaks with all the enthusiasm of a true geek. The book is liberally sprinkled with footnotes (and a hefty 50 pages of end notes), appropriate considering that nearly every punctuation symbol in this book gained its start from the annotation marks of monks, scribes, or scholars. (The chapter on daggers and asterisks, of course, uses those symbols to mark the asides.) Some game-changers, like the sudden confines of the typing press or the yet-more-restrictive typewriter, extend their influence across numerous chapters. Each character brings its own brand of intrigue, from the closed case of why paragraphs are now indented—the blank space was left for the pilcrow, P, which lazy or hurried scribes left out to the murkier question of who named the octothorpe...