

Technology Journal -- Books: Too Much Ink, Too Little Time --- Below, Our Guide to Internet Magazines -- the Must-Read and the Must-Toss

By Robert Templer

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

The August edition of Wired had a distinctly retro feel about it. Ex-Netscaper Marc Andreesson on the cover and inside there is a seemingly endless, heartslowingly dull, 14-page story on superblimp air ships, a technology that makes a doomed comeback every few decades until one blows up. Another 10 pages were devoted to quite astoundingly bad snapshots of the Indian ship-breaking industry, another industry that doesn't immediately strike one as mapping the lonely frontiers of the New Economy. September's magazine was a little better in that it managed articles on robotics that were at least forward-looking.

So that leaves the heavyweight contenders - Fast Company, Red Herring, eCompany Now and the Industry Standard along with its new monthly Grok. Red Herring gets some plaudits for imaginative reporting and a cheeky approach - it was this magazine that ran photographs of the Netscape parking lot at night pre- and post-IPO. The empty spaces after the shares were doled out spoke volumes about the dangers of handing out massive wealth to your workers.

eCompany Now has the slick blandness you'd expect from a Time publication along with provincial, behind-the-curve reporting and a patronizing tone of explaining trends to the masses (a long article on how office design has moved beyond the cubicle). It has the feel of a publication set up because executives at Time Warner who still get their secretaries to print their e-mail felt they had to play catch-up with all the New Economy magazines.

FULL TEXT

The big difference between previous technological revolutions such as the introduction of electricity and the recent arrival of the Internet is that back then people weren't expected to keep up with it all.

Doubtless there were tiresome early-adopters who casually dropped baffling words like "light bulb" and "telegraph" into conversation at every opportunity but I don't suppose anyone worried. You could just switch electricity on -- you didn't have to spend every waking moment reading magazines called "Volt!" or "Amp User."

Nowadays, unless you grind through half-a-dozen inch-thick publications a month, you're likely to be ambushed in a meeting by someone breezily using the latest obscure Silicon Valley jargon. ("If we don't pivot to a more Web-bendable vector-based cost grid we may as well pack up and go home. What do you think?") Your colleague may talk in a way that suggests he spent the weekend barbecuing with Jeff Bezos but everyone knows he learned it all from a glossary in one of the new technoglossies.

While this space is usually reserved for book reviews, we're offering a slight variation this month. Because many readers get more of their tech information from magazines, a guide to the best and worst is in order. For no one has the time to read all those weeklies and monthlies. You'd have to be a speed-reading hermit to stay on top of them

all.

Fortunately, I am a speed-reading hermit. So for the past few months I have waded through nearly 2,500 pages of all the tech business magazines (actually not all of them, only those I could carry back to my grotto without injuring myself).

First, the good news. There are plenty of them that aren't worth bothering with. Top of my discard pile is Wired magazine. It may have started it all only in the early 1990s but it is already suffering from middle-aged bloat.

It feels a little like the New Yorker in its pre-celebrity-worship incarnation when it would run 45,000 words on subjects like zinc. Wired's Olympian view of the technological world and its faint sneer about almost everything and everyone quickly wears on you.

The August edition of Wired had a distinctly retro feel about it. Ex-Netscaper Marc Andreesson on the cover and inside there is a seemingly endless, heartslowingly dull, 14-page story on superblimp air ships, a technology that makes a doomed comeback every few decades until one blows up. Another 10 pages were devoted to quite astoundingly bad snapshots of the Indian ship-breaking industry, another industry that doesn't immediately strike one as mapping the lonely frontiers of the New Economy. September's magazine was a little better in that it managed articles on robotics that were at least forward-looking.

It seems unclear what the point of Wired is these days. Now that it is owned by Conde Nast, perhaps it is supposed to be the Vanity Fair of the tech world, a slightly guilty but pleasurable diversion? Unfortunately it's a chore to read.

The Asian and British magazines are also mostly not worth bothering with. Tech magazine from Singapore is simply a dull advertorial. Britain's E-First, which bills itself as the magazine of "e-commerce for business leaders," has acres of empty white space, in between which it briefly tackles useful but not exactly fascinating topics such as on-line payments.

But it has a parochial, overly local feel, with its articles on how the Internet is changing the British property market. Internet Business, another publication from Britain, is much more professional and skeptical, questioning everything from the future of broadband to the pervasive youth culture in dot-coms.

So that leaves the heavyweight contenders - Fast Company, Red Herring, eCompany Now and the Industry Standard along with its new monthly Grok. Red Herring gets some plaudits for imaginative reporting and a cheeky approach - it was this magazine that ran photographs of the Netscape parking lot at night pre- and post-IPO. The empty spaces after the shares were doled out spoke volumes about the dangers of handing out massive wealth to your workers.

When it does things well, Red Herring does them very well, but there is a sense of padding in the magazine. (Memo to vain CEOs: If Red Herring ever comes to take your photo, don't let them. They seem to favor photographers from the automated photo-booth school of portraiture who make their subjects look shiny-faced, feverish and pale.)

eCompany Now has the slick blandness you'd expect from a Time publication along with provincial, behind-the-curve reporting and a patronizing tone of explaining trends to the masses (a long article on how office design has moved beyond the cubicle). It has the feel of a publication set up because executives at Time Warner who still get their secretaries to print their e-mail felt they had to play catch-up with all the New Economy magazines.

Consequently, it lacks the novelty or freshness that Fast Company brought to the market. Fast Company, the fattest and most intelligent of the magazines, is still the monthly to beat.

Grok, a monthly add-on to the Industry Standard, is an unfortunate name for an unfortunate magazine. The word supposedly means "to understand something profoundly," but it may be better employed in a sentence such as "this magazine is a great, steaming pile of Grok."

And the winner of the weeklies is ... the Industry Standard. A highly readable magazine with useful stories, a sense of humor, and an understanding that people are busy and want information carefully thought through, not just splurged out to fill the gaps between hundreds of pages of advertisements. Unlike most of its competitors, the magazine has a view that extends beyond the United States. One recent issue had stories on Softbank and Indian software companies. The Industry Standard is also willing to question many of the values adopted in the tech world rather than simply celebrating everything that comes out of Silicon Valley.

And there's a useful little glossary of new terms each week that you can use to embarrass your colleagues in meetings.

Send comments to technology@awsj.com

DETAILS

Subject:	Internet
Publication title:	Asian Wall Street Journal; Victoria, Hong Kong
Pages:	T15
Number of pages:	0
Publication year:	2000
Publication date:	Sep 25, 2000
Publisher:	Dow Jones &Company Inc.
Place of publication:	Victoria, Hong Kong
Country of publication:	United States, Victoria, Hong Kong
Publication subject:	Business And Economics--Banking And Finance
ISSN:	03779920
Source type:	Newspaper

Language of publication:	English
Document type:	NEWSPAPER
ProQuest document ID:	315433437
Document URL:	http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/newspapers/technology-journal-books-too-much-ink-little-time/docview/315433437/se-2?accountid=11311
Copyright:	Copyright Dow Jones & Company Inc Sep 25, 2000
Last updated:	2023-11-20
Database:	ProQuest One Business, ProQuest Central

LINKS

[Linking Service](#)

Database copyright © 2024 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved.

[Terms and Conditions](#) [Contact ProQuest](#)