

Robonomics: Prepare Today for the Jobless Economy of Tomorrow
John Crews

Too broad of a subject for such a short book

As you can see from the table of contents, this is an incredibly ambitious book for only 3605 locations in the Kindle publication -- . Th about 60 printed pages. The implications of automation in any one of the sectors addressed by a single chapter would warrant a book.

Crews' view of artificial intelligence s that controlling the physical activity of a robot is the hardest challenge. He writes that it will be more difficult to replace the janitor than the Chief Executive Officer. He applies this conclusion repeatedly, and each of the sectors addressed by the chapters.

He talks about the sequence of technology adaptation, from the first appearance of an innovation to its widespread adaptation. The examples he gives include color TV, cell phones and personal computers. The device continues to improve rapidly at the same time it comes down in price. He anticipates that the same thing will happen with robotics.

His opinion is that the limiting factor in artificial intelligence is simply machine speed. When computers get fast enough, he would contend, they will be able to mimic the human brain. Other authors see it differently. The human brain is not all that fast in doing things that computers do. Yet, on the other hand, it incorporates human will, desires, lusts, prejudices and so many other all too human factors. It will be a long time before computers are as quirky as we are.

That is the reason I would contend that computers will be a long time in replicating a Chief Executive Officer. CEOs have to deal with human factors, dealing with human issues such as affirmative action, ego, competitiveness and so on. It takes a human to know human. It will be a long time before machines can dope us out – we cannot even dope ourselves out.

I recently reviewed another book, "Against the Gods" that deals with human attempts to automate understanding financial markets. They have been at it for 30 years and it still doesn't work. The computers still don't get it. The Wall Street quants live and die by their output, often getting rich but fairly frequently also failing spectacularly.

This book is an interesting start, but I would recommend that the reader look for more substantive works that are narrower in range.

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