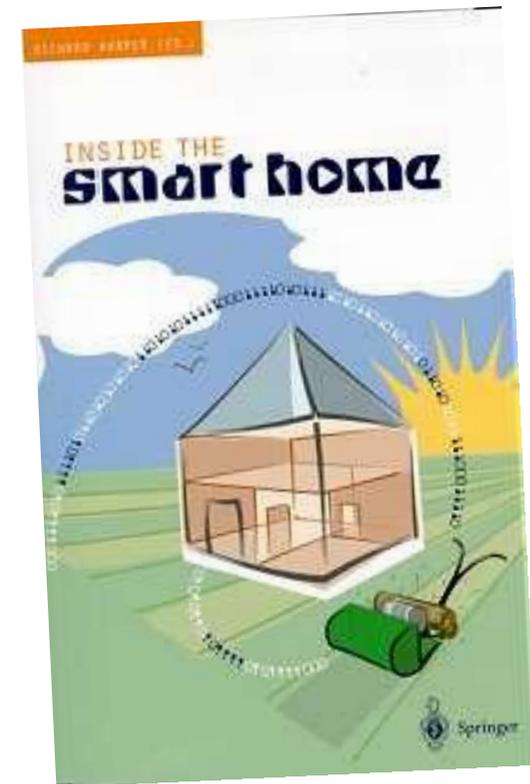


## Inside the Smart Home Digital Book Club

Richard Harper (ed)  
Springer 2003

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and machines Actions Resources

# A journey into the Smart Home of the future



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Will our fridge make the shopping itself using the internet? Will the lights switch on when we tell them to do so? Intelligent homes have been the area of interest for futurologists and visionaries. Now with the new technologies progressing so quickly, we may find ourselves in a smart home sooner than expected.

## What's future life like?

Convergence, internet, wireless, teleworking, PDAs – all too familiar jargon from the changing world marketers wrestle with daily. We accept that consumer media consumption is undergoing the most profound change since the advent of television and in spite of the excitement of the internet today, most realise that the main changes are yet to come.

But in spite of their origins in information and communication, the effects of the new technologies are far from confined to media. They will change the way consumers behave in the workplace and the home. They will alter the types of relationships we have with our friends, family, suppliers and clients. In twenty years time consumer marketers will have a whole new toolkit and radically different marketing channels.

But how much time does any of us spend thinking about this future? What is most likely to happen? What key themes are likely to emerge? What is science fiction and what will be consumer reality? Enter Richard Harper and a worldwide cast of twenty six leading academics to take us on a journey into the Smart Home of the future.

The science fiction writers' artistry is replaced by the weighty arguments of fieldwork, live studies, interface design and practical results.

Inside the Smart Home is a rare text that delves into the interactive world far deeper than anything else on the business bookshelves. The fusion of the academic and the practical make for a compelling read. The science fiction writers' artistry is replaced by the weighty arguments of fieldwork, live studies, interface design and practical results.

For those involved in e-business, these essays provide a riveting window into the near future and the first glimpses of the longer term shape of consumer culture. They fuse together the key disciplines of computing science, sociology and business to paint a picture of how our lives will change.

## It's just the beginning

Today we only see the merest traces of the symptoms of this new networked environment. We download MP3s and move them between devices like sheets of paper around a desk. Tablet PCs are giving us a screen-based alternative to printed books for the first time, email spills over from our work lives into the way of keeping in touch with our friends and family, the latest

DVDs arrive in the morning post with Amazon and tesco.co.uk deliver groceries to the door in the afternoon.

Our music systems are wired, albeit clumsily, into our TVs and a forest of cables hides under the desk. But what if we were as wireless in the home as in the state-of-the-art office? What if the technology, instead of being cumbersome to set up, just slotted together as easily as our flatpack furniture does? What if the costs plummeted in line with Moore's Law and use of the equipment became second nature.

Academics have been wrestling with the role of what we now see as the networked society since before the 1980s. But this future is no longer opaque. Some questions have already been answered by building electronic smart homes, filling them with real people, standing back and lighting the touch paper. The Orange at Home project was one of the first of these and helps set the agenda for social and technical issues marketing strategists need to plan for. It is a fascinating window into consumer behaviour in the networked society.

### Digital utensils

To give some context, Frances Aldrich explores the concept of a smart home and defines it as being "equipped with computing and information technology which anticipates and responds to the needs of the occupants, working to promote their comfort, convenience, security and entertainment through the management of technology within the home and connections to the world beyond".

Simply considering the range of networked devices already possible in a commercial environment provides a blueprint for how this home may look in the future as the cost of technology falls and the development of these networks snowballs. Although early attempts at manufactured smart homes may have fallen on deaf markets, there seems little doubt that this is the way things will progress.

### About the Digital Book Club series

In times of huge economic and social change, knowledge becomes a critical success factor. We created the Digital Book Club reviews to bring you closer to the people and ideas shaping the digital networked economy. They are short reviews of texts we'd recommend, and are published monthly. We also publish similar Digital Thought Leadership interviews and Digital Insight Reports to accompany our own talks and training workshops. Knowledge and training can unlock the potential of your team.

John Strain gets the reader to reassess the notions of space and time in our domestic lives and encourages us to loosen these concepts from the fixed anchors that we have in our mind by using tangible examples such as E-Banking to show how fast relationships can change.

Lynne Hamill then examines the changes in how consumers allocate their time budgets within this home, while Sue Peters documents the watershed in the changing relationship we have with media channels brought about by the new interactive platforms.

## It is a fascinating window into consumer behaviour in the networked society

Turning their attention to the social context of home computing, David Frohlich and Robert Kraut unpack the expanding role of PCs in domestic life and draw parallels between the arrival of a second computer in the home and that of a second television. Later Sanna Leppanen and Marika Jokinen turn theory into practice as they map out the daily routines and means of communication in the smart home of the future.

### Humans and machines

Harper's book is a deep exploration of the relationship between people and technology backed by a vast body of evidence from genuine world experts. If you thought that the limit to domestic technology was a broadband PC then this will be a loud wake up call. For the marketer keen to fit this weeks newspaper headlines into context, it is deeply enlightening.

## For the business strategist it is a techno-fuelled adrenalin shot in the corporate arm. For interactive media executives it is an indispensable roadmap

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## Actions

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The Digital Thought Leaders on [DigitalStrategyConsulting.com](http://DigitalStrategyConsulting.com)

### About the author

Danny Meadows-Klue has been a commentator on the digital networked industries since 1995. He managed the UK's first online newspaper and has helped run web businesses ranging from mass market portals and consumer magazines, to online stores, search and email services. Among his industry roles he is the co-founder and former chairman of the UK and European Internet and Interactive Advertising Bureau, and has been lecturing on digital marketing for more than a decade. He set up Digital Strategy Consulting in 2000 to help firms accelerate their own digital networked media strategies.



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