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***Review of Ageing and technology
Perspectives from the social sciences***
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REVIEW

As the title suggests, this is a book that serves to explore technology within the context of 'ageing'. Within the context of a booming increase in the senior population the authors assert that until recently technology and technological advances have largely ignored the 'human factor', with the ageing individual viewed as a malfunctioning machine whose diagnosed deficiencies and limitations must be overcome with the support of technological devices. While technological advances have undoubtedly contributed to an improvement in the lives of the elderly, posited within the subjective needs and fears of human beings, this publication approaches the development and use of technology from the human perspective. Through the adoption of this approach the authors seek to sensitise us to the ambivalences involved in the interaction between humans and technology.

All that glitters is not silver

In the introduction the editors guide us carefully through the themes under investigation, and via a précis of the research contained within each chapter, weave the reader successfully in and out of each compelling section of this fascinating book. As such this introductory chapter serves not only to provide the reader with a preliminary insight into each author's individual contribution, but clarifies the editor's intentions behind the compilation, and subsequent rationale for publication.

The book itself is divided into three distinct sections. Within each, the individual chapters, authored by an eclectic mix of writers, present abridged research findings that explore an aspect of technology and ageing. This approach

contributes to the 'flow' of the book and supports the reader's engagement and ability to develop a deeper understanding of each theme.

The first section, *Ageing, Technology and (Inter-)Personal Development: Old Aged as Technology Users*, explores the motives of the elderly in using technology in their daily lives. In chapter one, within the context of research that suggests many products designed to support the elderly are rejected by them, Pelizäus-Hoffmeister presents findings from a study that explores the motives of the elderly to use technology in their daily lives.

Picking up on this theme (senior citizens engagement with technology) in the next chapter Fernandez-Ardevol explores the 'non-use' of mobile telephony by older people. This is followed by one of my favourite chapters, wittily entitled 'older women on the game', where Marston and Graner-Ray present research from the under-researched field of women and gaming, with findings that serve to increase our understanding of digital gaming from the perspectives of an ageing female cohort. Finally drawing this first section to a close in chapter four, Biniok, Menke and Selke explore issues of social inclusion from the perspective of elderly people living in rural areas.

In the second section, *Ageing, Technology and Elderly Care: Assistive Technologies*, the book presents a compilation of chapters that explore the potential impact of advances in technology designed explicitly to support the elderly, and how these contribute to improving the quality of their lives.

The section begins with a chapter entitled 'Skripting age – the negotiation of age and aging in ambient assisted living'. As the title suggests, in this chapter Endter presents a fascinating account of her work that seeks to discover if it is possible to remain autonomous, independent and self-determined (in other words lead an independent life) as one gets older within a postmodern society with the support of appropriate assistive technologies.

Further chapters within this section present research findings that explore similar themes. Gulhen explores 'Making space for ageing: embedding social and psychological needs of older people into smart home technology' which is followed by Kamphof's 'Seeking again: dementia, personhood and technology' and Weinberger, Krings and Decker who present a captivating chapter entitled 'Enabling a mobile and independent way of life for people with dementia – needs-oriented technology development'.

Finally, within this section, Klein, Cook and Moyle present a comparison of research findings relating to the outcomes of PARO and PLEO care home interventions that explore the utilisation of 'Emotional robotics' in the assistive care of older people.

In the third and final section, *Policy Making and Discourses of Ageing*, Domínguez-Rué and Nierling present a compilation of five chapters each of which explores ageing and technology from the perspective of policy. At first glance the content within this section could be perceived as being a little 'dry', but each author's unique approach brings to the fore genuinely interesting perspectives to this important topic. In the first chapter, within the context of ageing and ICT policy, governance and the role of ethics, Mantovani and Turnheim navigate the European landscape. This is followed by Fitzgerald and Adams who explore ageing and technology from the perspective of decision making and present a framework for assessing uncertainty.

In the next chapter Wolbring and Abdullah explore 'Ageing and technology: what is the take home message for newspaper readers?', followed by Sand and Jongsma's 'Toward an ageless society: assessing a transhumanist programme'. In the concluding chapter Beimborn, Kadi, Köberer, Mühleck, and Spindler focus on the 'human' through the presentation of their research that examines interdisciplinary reflections on ageing and technology.

Summary

Ageing and technology perspectives from the social sciences is a captivating publication that I expect I will continue to revisit, utilising it as a source of reference from which to explore additional literature within the field. Whilst not essential, I do think having an understanding of the editor's rationale and motivation to publish this book is beneficial to the reader.

While the book is divided into three distinct sections it is not necessary to read each in order. However, because of the way the book is structured whilst there are particular chapters that work well together, it is very easy to dip in and out of the sections, but from my perspective reading a section at a time does enhance one's ability to develop a deeper understanding of each specific field.

Predominantly academic in nature, this book is surprisingly easy to read, and I would recommend it as worthwhile reading for anyone interested in furthering their understanding of the issues and challenges associated with this field. This book challenges the reader to view everyday issues from alternative perspectives, and has the potential not only to influence, but to change our thinking about technology within the context of society and the elderly. As such this book makes a significant contribution to developing our understanding of the issues relating to an increasing senior population and their engagement with technology. It is therefore, of potential significance to those with an interest in, and concern for the quality of life, care and well-being of senior citizens. Particularly those with an interest in the development and / or use of technology to enhance the quality of life of the elderly and also policy makers and researchers.

Thought provoking on numerous levels, I have no doubt that elements of the book will almost certainly cause the reader to stop and consider the issues under discussion from previously unconsidered perspectives. On a personal note this book has already proven invaluable to me as a resource for the instigation of discourse and wider debate around the development of technology within the context of 'human'.