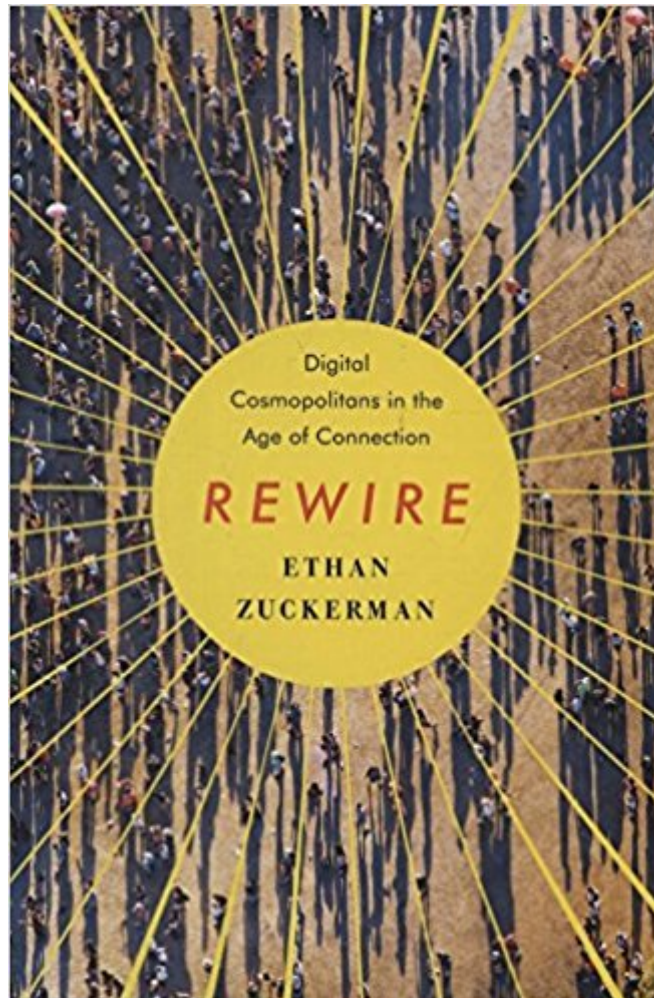


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# Rewire: Digital Cosmopolitans In The Age Of Connection



## Synopsis

A rousing call to action for those who would be citizens of the world—online and off. We live in an age of connection, one that is accelerated by the Internet. This increasingly ubiquitous, immensely powerful technology often leads us to assume that as the number of people online grows, it inevitably leads to a smaller, more cosmopolitan world. We'll understand more, we think. We'll know more. We'll engage more and share more with people from other cultures. In reality, it is easier to ship bottles of water from Fiji to Atlanta than it is to get news from Tokyo to New York. In *Rewire*, media scholar and activist Ethan Zuckerman explains why the technological ability to communicate with someone does not inevitably lead to increased human connection. At the most basic level, our human tendency to “flock together” means that most of our interactions, online or off, are with a small set of people with whom we have much in common. In examining this fundamental tendency, Zuckerman draws on his own work as well as the latest research in psychology and sociology to consider technology's role in disconnecting ourselves from the rest of the world. For those who seek a wider picture—a picture now critical for survival in an age of global economic crises and pandemics—Zuckerman highlights the challenges, and the headway already made, in truly connecting people across cultures. From voracious xenophiles eager to explore other countries to bridge figures who are able to connect one culture to another, people are at the center of his vision for a true kind of cosmopolitanism. And it is people who will shape a new approach to existing technologies, and perhaps invent some new ones, that embrace translation, cross-cultural inspiration, and the search for new, serendipitous experiences. Rich with Zuckerman's personal experience and wisdom, *Rewire* offers a map of the social, technical, and policy innovations needed to more tightly connect the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Internet has given us an unprecedented ability to share knowledge and information, and yet, Zuckerman argues, we aren't really taking advantage of that global connectivity. The Internet lets us see the whole world, but we generally look at only one small part of it, using the technology to tailor the news we receive to our interests, thus narrowing our focus. And, perhaps most important, the bigger the Internet becomes, and the more information there is available, the harder it is to find anything (and the easier it is to misinterpret or misunderstand what we do find). The challenge, Zuckerman says, isn't access; it's paying attention. We need to expand our focus, sample other cultures, and seek out the new and unfamiliar. It's hard to counter the author's well-reasoned arguments, even if his central point (hey, buddy, you're not using the Internet right) might sting a little. --David Pitt

"Ethan Zuckerman is a true cosmopolitan, a citizen of the universe. In *Rewire*, he describes how our new communications tools allow us to take part in a truly global conversation and why almost none of us actually take advantage of that opportunity." - Clay Shirky, author of *Cognitive Surplus* and *Here Comes Everybody*

"A compelling account of an intertwined global world, Ethan Zuckerman's *Rewire* makes you fall in love with a wide range of cultural practices and peoples. As he explains the importance of understanding not just how information flows but also how people connect, he lays a foundation for rethinking what global citizenship can and should be." - danah boyd, Microsoft Research

"Weaving a rich tapestry of stories, data, and theories, *Rewire* challenges many of our core assumptions about globalization and connectedness and how the Internet affects us. It is a book well worth reading." - Yochai Benkler, author of *The Penguin and the Leviathan* and *The Wealth of Networks*

"No one is in a better position than MIT and Harvard's Ethan Zuckerman to confront the Internet's failure to connect us across cultures. Zuckerman's astounding range, careful reasoning, and superb storytelling make *Rewire* an essential and urgent read." - David Weinberger, author of *Too Big to Know*

"Ethan Zuckerman is the real deal, a thinker and activist brilliantly connected to what's really happening on the

Internet on a genuinely global basis. For those who think the digital era gives them all the information they need, Rewire shows them how much more there is to learn. - Craig Newmark, founder, craigslist and craigconnects  
"One of our most important books on globalization." - Steve O'Keefe, New York Journal of Books

I loved how Ethan took the current technologically connected and wired culture into perspective. Unlike many books that criticize current trends and habits with relation to technology, Ethan analyzes the reasoning behind our behavior and posits ways in which we can re-orientate and make full use of the technology that is at our finger tips. The examples that he peppers through the book from personal experiences and through his research brought light to and thoroughly supported his arguments. This was definitely a refreshing and insightful read on tech and culture and the need to change habits to harness the possibilities of a better connected future.

I had the pleasure of hearing Zuckerman present at a conference earlier this year to an audience that didn't work in his particular field (Zuckerman is the Director of Civic Media at the MIT Media Lab and focuses on the distribution of attention in mainstream and new/social media). While not his typical constituency, Zuckerman expertly drew the connections from his research and knowledge of global trends around media and individual engagement that clearly resonated with our broad-based group. I found myself wanting to learn more about his work and came to "Rewire." "Rewire" is a fascinating read that coalesces Zuckerman's passions, including Africa and the developing world, the attention paid to and consumption of media focused on global issues, the expansion of individual voice through social media, among others. His purpose in writing the book is to elevate the importance of living dual lives, as citizens of nations and citizens of the world. His belief is that those with a practical, literate understanding of global issues and cultures ("cosmopolitans") will yield, to keep it simple, a better world. In a tightly organized but highly readable fashion, he advocates for an alternative mindset around media consumption and engagement to solve a core problem of our "connected age", a paradox: that while it is easier than ever to share information from across the world, the manifold lenses through which we access and view the world - Twitter, newspapers, television, people - have become narrower. Similarly, we are less open to "serendipitous" encounters that may foster new learnings and cross-cultural understanding. It's terribly interesting. While Zuckerman's argument is interspersed with stories of other's research, case studies, and examples, at times they seem self-aggrandizing. In many cases, he knows the individuals involved and worked with them at some point in his life (the introduction of the book

invites the reader to join he and his friends in realizing a "rewired" world). He clearly values their insights, but on occasion the names become muddled. On the whole, they support his argument if they have not outright informed his argument. As a newcomer to books such as these, I'm sure there are more thoughtful counter-arguments to what Zuckerman proposes. For myself, the core question I have is whether or not he overstates the importance of the examples he presents. He argues that people have a tendency to care more about what's immediate to them and around them. Additionally, what's already like them (homophily). I spend quite a bit of my time working in a severely disinvested city where many of its residents are experiencing extreme poverty and isolation, lack of safety, and other social pathologies. I can't help but think that the issues experienced individually in neighborhoods like what I've described have more pressing matters to attend to, if they have adequate resources and access to the "connectors", those who can provide guidance and curation to other cultures and information. At what level is participation possible as opposed to trickle-down beneficiary of a more caring world? Of course, the book arcs at a high-level, so more practical-oriented questions aren't addressed. Overall, as a call to engage, the book is inspiring and enjoyable. Sure, there are holes to poke but at its core the book is fundamentally about one thing: the possibility of a better connected world and better outcomes for people across the globe. If that also interests you, you will enjoy Zuckerman's idealism.

Ethan Zuckerman has an uncommon way of showing diversity as, not only a benefit, but as a need for the success of society and business. His own openness and curiosity towards the world makes his writing an interesting and fresh view on differences, a much needed ability in today's affairs.

I read this awesome book for my social media class. It contains relevant examples and makes readers question their media practices/consumption. Overall it added a great perspective!

Super fast, good product

I bought this book because I had to read it for a class. At the end, I loved it and I recommend it.

Rewire: Digital Cosmopolitans in the Age of Connection offers a realistic appraisal of how technological innovation, especially related to communication, has changed how people interact alongside a vision that future developments will enable a new form of cosmopolitanism accessible to an ever increasing share of the global population. Zuckerman's own high level leadership

experiences combine with significant interaction with scholarly material from multiple disciplines to form a hopeful volume that will educate a broad readership, encourage those tasked with crafting innovations that enable a more connected future, and inspire many to be more intentional in the quest to live as digital cosmopolitans.

Zuckerman provides an in-depth analysis of the gulf between how we believe the internet works and how it actually does, taking us on a journey through the digital landscape using extremely relevant examples and well backed research. To top it off, he provides concrete examples to enable readers to be the global citizens they're meant to be. I recommend this book to anyone interested in the future of the internet and our media consumption.

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