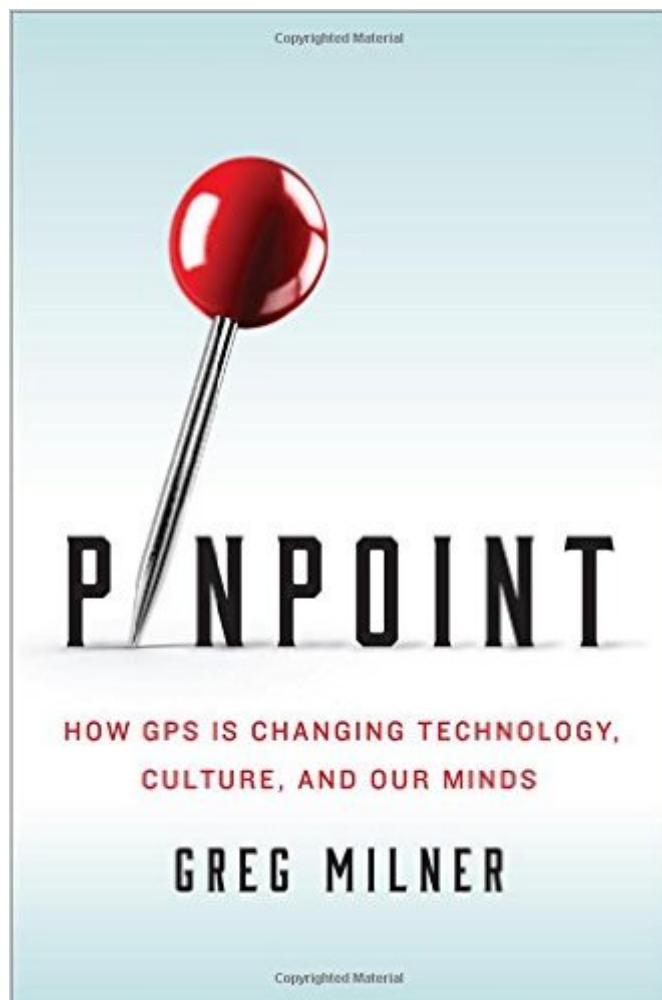


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Pinpoint: How GPS Is Changing Technology, Culture, And Our Minds



Synopsis

Pinpoint tells the story of GPS, a scientific marvel that enables almost all modern technology but is changing us in profound ways. Over the last fifty years, humanity has developed an extraordinary shared utility: the Global Positioning System. Even as it guides us across town, GPS helps land planes, route mobile calls, anticipate earthquakes, predict weather, locate oil deposits, measure neutrinos, grow our food, and regulate global finance. It is as ubiquitous and essential as another Cold War technology, the Internet. In Pinpoint, Greg Milner takes us on a fascinating tour of a hidden system that touches almost every aspect of our modern life. While GPS has brought us breathtakingly accurate information about our planetary environment and physical space, it has also created new forms of human behavior. We have let it saturate the world's systems so completely and so quickly that we are just beginning to confront the possible consequences. A single GPS timing flaw, whether accidental or malicious, could bring down the electrical grid, hijack drones, or halt the world financial system. The use, and potential misuse, of GPS data by government and corporations raise disturbing questions about ethics and privacy. GPS may be altering the nature of human cognition possibly even rearranging the gray matter in our heads. Pinpoint tells the sweeping story of GPS from its conceptual origins as a bomb guidance system to its presence in almost everything we do. Milner examines the different ways humans have understood physical space, delves into the neuroscience of cognitive maps, and questions GPS's double-edged effect on our culture. A fascinating and original story of the scientific urge toward precision, Pinpoint offers startling insight into how humans understand their place in the world.

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Customer Reviews

It's a rare technology that becomes so pervasive and ubiquitous that for many people it becomes a necessary entity. Over the last decade, GPS is one of those technologies. In *Pinpoint: How GPS Is Changing Technology, Culture, and Our Minds*, author Greg Milner has written a highly engaging and fascinating book on the story of GPS. More than just an embellishment of a Wikipedia entry on the topic; the book covers a wide variety of fascinating subjects connected to GPS. Matters from Polynesian navigation, precision agriculture, seismology all the way to meteorology and much more are detailed as to how they relate to navigation and GPS. Chapter 5 is particularly interesting where Milner details the new phenomenon known as death by GPS. This is where GPS users lose cognitive ability, become disengaged from the road, and end up crashing or losing their way; ending in death. With all of the benefits that GPS affords, its meteoric rise into use means that we are now just beginning to take stock of how GPS can affect the cognitive map of people. Milner writes that a study at Cornell University looked at the effect GPS use had on drivers and reached the conclusion that GPS has eliminated much of the need to pay attention. Sadly, that disengagement can result in tragic consequences. Rather than just focusing on the satellites and underlying technology that makes GPS work, Milner goes behind the scenes and details the people and organizations that created GPS. While the benefits of GPS are astounding and revolutionary, Milner writes that it was not always such an easy sell. The creators of GPS had to deal with military and government bureaucracies, in which the GPS project came close to being cancelled on many occasions.

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