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Book Reviews: *Anywhere: How Global Connectivity is Revolutionizing the Way We Do Business*

Aaron W. Hughey
Western Kentucky University, aaron.hughey@wku.edu

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BOOK REVIEWS

Emily Nagle Green, *Anywhere: How Global Connectivity is Revolutionizing the Way We Do Business*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 2010, 281 pp

reviewed by *Aaron W. Hughey, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY 42101, USA. E-mail: aaron.hughey@wku.edu.*

'Quick quiz: What impact has technology had on your life in the past five or ten years? I can probably guarantee you have personal experience with: the Internet, the cell phone, and the digital camera. Each one has been a game-changer, transforming what we do, how we do it, and when and where we do it.' (p 4)

So begins *Anywhere: How Global Connectivity is Revolutionizing the Way We Do Business* by Emily Nagle Green, the President and CEO of Yankee Group, a global technology research company. Green also serves as Vice-Chair of the Massachusetts Innovation and Technology Exchange (MITX), the largest Internet advocacy council in the USA. She has a Bachelor's degree in linguistics from Georgetown University; her Master's is in artificial intelligence and computer graphics from the University of Pennsylvania.

Anywhere has 12 chapters organized into four sections. The first section, 'Welcome to Anywhere', describes the transformation that is taking place as a consequence of the proliferation of broadband access to the Internet. More than just a matter of amplified speed, the ubiquitous presence of the Internet is redefining everything about our world: that is, it is fundamentally changing the nature of all human interaction.

'The truth is that we've just begun a journey that will take us to a future very different from today's sometimes rewarding, sometimes bewildering connectivity experience,' Green writes. 'It's been sparked by a potent trio of forces – a common digital network, the availability of broadband capacity, and the powerful economics of wireless transmission.' (p 6)

Green does an exceptional job of illuminating the intricacies of the 'Brave New World' we are inescapably entering in a way that is accessible to a wide range of readers, including those with minimal understanding of many of the concepts she explains. She makes absolutely no presumptions about the knowledge base of her readers and takes the time to educate those who may be unfamiliar with even the most rudimentary aspects of the technological revolution she is describing. If you have no idea what is meant by terms such as 'hot-spot', 'bundling', 'fixed/mobile convergence', or even 'broadband', you will feel that you understand them intimately by the time you finish the first part of *Anywhere*. (Green includes an extensive glossary of terms in the back of the book that is immensely helpful for the novice.)

The second section of the book, 'The Anywhere Consumer', deals with how the Internet is becoming incorporated into just about every feature of our existence. But rather than exerting a homogenizing influence, Green asserts that the enhanced capabilities of the emerging technologies actually provide a more individualized and personal experience for everyone.

'It's already very clear that while we all share basic desires like connecting with each other, there are differences in what people do and think about mobility that reflect diversity in their education, income, lifestyle, age, profession, and more,' notes Green (p 88). She sees the revolution as being more human than technological, and includes numerous case studies that serve to bring this idea to life.

Part three, 'The Anywhere Enterprise', focuses more exclusively on how broadband is significantly altering the essential nature of work. As everything continues to become more interconnected, how we accomplish our jobs will inevitably change in many ways. 'The way people work in 2020 will be profoundly different as work life becomes more thoroughly integrated and intermingled with personal life,' Green argues (p 142). 'The office will be more a choice than a necessity, because executives and managers will be able to monitor the work of their employees from any location.'

'Everyone stands to gain, and blue-collar workers may well gain more,' Green adds (p 142). 'After all, it's the construction worker and the farmer who have been starved for information because of device constraints…'. Her point is that, as interactivity can increasingly be facilitated via more and varied appliances, it is less and less the exclusive domain of desktops and laptops. Indeed, the smartphone has already made these gateways to the Internet seem rather quaint and even old-fashioned.

In the final section, 'Profiting from Anywhere', Green discusses how instantaneous access to information by everyone at any moment affects business strategy. The Internet has already fundamentally changed the way products and services are marketed; Green argues persuasively that so far we have seen only the tip of the iceberg. 'Beyond winning new customers within existing markets, you'll be able to take advantage of the billions of potential customers in new markets that are now joining the global digital network fabric,' she observes (p 187).

It should be noted that the book is not as comprehensive as it could be in its treatment of some emerging issues and trends. For example, one of the most important technological developments on the horizon, at least from a business perspective, seems to be 'cloud computing'. As Green notes, this involves 'moving all applications and services out of the company's data center and into the network itself' (p 148). Leading-edge companies such as Amazon and Google have experienced phenomenal success by adopting cloud computing as their primary conceptual and technological framework; it is one of the innovations that make much of what Green describes possible. Yet she hardly mentions the practice in her book.

Similarly, security is another area that does not receive much attention in *Anywhere*. All of the business advantages that Green describes can be realized only if end-users can be assured that all their transactions will take place in an environment that is absolutely secure. Green notes that 'many connectivity opportunities ahead will present privacy, security, and regulatory challenges in the near term, requiring the market at large to adapt' (p 203). But she does not follow up that assertion with any realistic discussion of this critically important consideration. As business continues to become more virtual, ensuring that personal data remain secure will become even more important than it is now. It was somewhat frustrating that Green did not devote more attention to this area of concern.

Anywhere concludes on both an optimistic and a cautionary note. Green is fully aware of the uncertainties that lie ahead as a result of the new global connectivity she is working to create. Regarding the issue of open access, she comments (p 214), 'If you've grown up with the Internet, perhaps this feels obvious – the way the world should work. But it's a distinct shift in mindset from twentieth-century single-purpose networks.'

Overall, *Anywhere* accomplishes Green's purpose in writing the book. By the time you have finished it, you definitely feel a lot more knowledgeable and confident about the world we live in – and where it is probably headed.

Of course, the question of whether this direction will ultimately prove to be in our best interest, either individually or collectively, has yet to be answered. As is the case with almost everything in life, only time will tell.