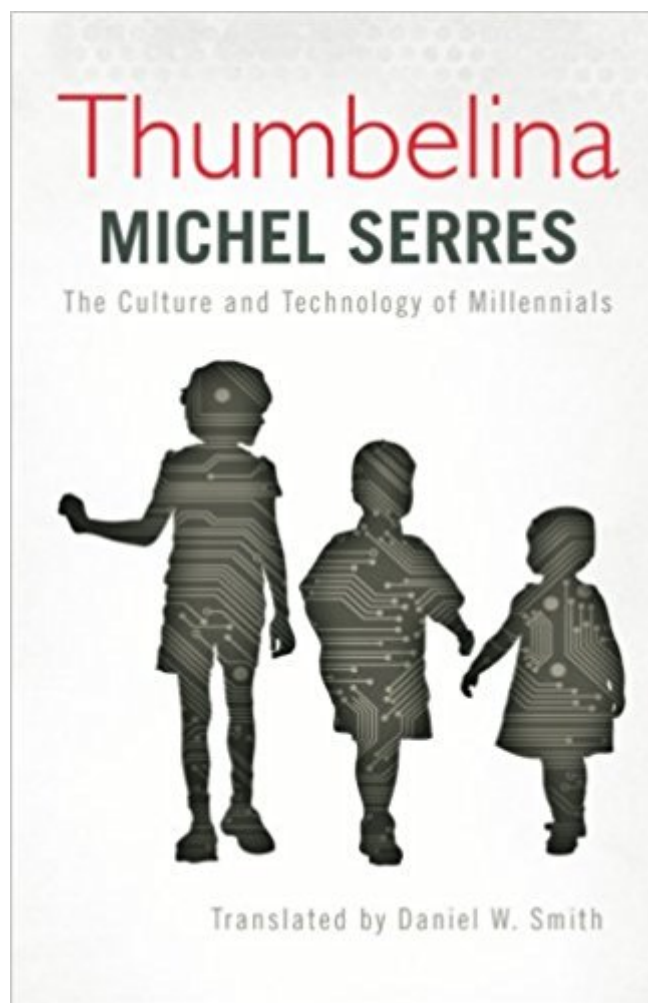


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Thumbelina: The Culture And Technology Of Millennials



Synopsis

The title of this timely and thought-provoking book, a French bestseller, refers to schoolgirls sending text messages to their friends on their smart phones. Michel Serres, one of France's most important living intellectuals, uses this image to get at something far broader: that humans are formed and shaped by technologies, and that with the advent of computers, smart phones, and the Internet, a new human is being born. These new human beings are our children – "Thumbelina (petite poucette) and Tom Thumb (petit poucet)" – but technologies have been changing so fast that parents scarcely know their children. Serres documents this cultural revolution, arguing that there have been several similar revolutions in the past: from oral cultures to cultures focused on reading and writing; the advent of the printing press; and now the complex changes brought about by the new information technologies – changes that are taking place at an accelerated pace and that affect us all.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Here is the characteristic voice of late Serres – "by turns searching, mischievous, joyous and enraged. Short, but drawing together arguments that Serres has been developing over five decades, Thumbelina is a visionary fable that calls for a new space of open, inventive thought to match the transformations in our bodies, our technologies and our forms of knowledge and social organisation. (Steven Connor, Professor of English, University of Cambridge)

Michel Serres is a professor in the history of science at Stanford University and a member of the Academie Francaise. A renowned and popular philosopher and one of France's leading intellectuals, he is the author of a number of works already translated into English, including *Variations on the Body*, *The Parasite*, *The Five Senses* and *Malfeasance: Appropriation Through Pollution*. Daniel W. Smith is associate professor of philosophy at Purdue University. He is the author of *Essays on Deleuze* and translator of several works, including *Deleuze's Francis Bacon*.

I am reading this book in light of a New York City elementary school's recent winning of an Apple Grant to implement technology throughout the school. It is a school in Chinatown working with a large population of people who have recently moved to the US from China. Some of the Thumbilinas and Tom Thumbs (read the book) in this school are children who were born in the United States, sent back to China (by parents who must be willing to work wherever the opportunity is in the US) and come back to America when it is time to start school. They are not only meeting "school" but are also meeting a new culture and their parents for the first time. Teachers have a tall order in this school. These students, as a result of this Apple Grant, will also be fully integrated into the emerging technology. Each child will be given an iPad, each teacher will be given an iPad and a MacBook, and each classroom will have an Apple Television. An Apple Team of support and professional development technicians will be on-site to help the teachers and students see all the things this new technology can and will do for them. To read this simple, accessible and profound book in light of the above and other emerging phenomena in our world is incredibly energizing and grounding. I am going to get copies of it for the school leaders and see what they make of it. For anyone who has any interest whatsoever in who, what, where, how and why our children will be and how they will be in the emerging age that is coming...this book will help to establish the view and the ground upon which these children are walking on. This book will help you to see how we, the adults, are simultaneously different, similar and ultimately inseparable from them as they emerge into a world that will redefine what it means to be a human, an immigrant and what it means to be a native for our evolving species. Can't recommend enough for teachers, politicians, urban planners, philosophers, teenagers, the 1%, the 99%, bankers, criminals, saints and ordinary imperfect human beings. Bravo, Professor Serres!! Brilliant!(this review written by a public servant working in public education)

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