

*The Media Equation, How People Treat Computers, Television and New Media Like Real People and Places*, by Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 305 pages.

The book is divided into six sections: I contains the introduction, II is media and manners, III is media and personality, IV is media and emotion, V is media and social roles, VI is media and form.

This book describes how humans interact with computers and technology. It starts with straightforward issues such as politeness (both on the side of the user and the computer) and interpersonal distance (bigger faces get remembered by users). It continues with such subjects as the personality of characters and interfaces, negative media, gender-specific computer personalities. Physical properties are covered, such as screen size, screen shape, screen fidelity, audio fidelity, the synchronization of video and audio, and motion.

This book covers a vast array of human-computer interaction topics that are not covered in the typical computer text and includes a very good bibliography. How many other texts have a section on flattery and subliminal messages? In total, this book was an interesting and easy read.

Reviewed by Ronald Finkbine, Ph.D.