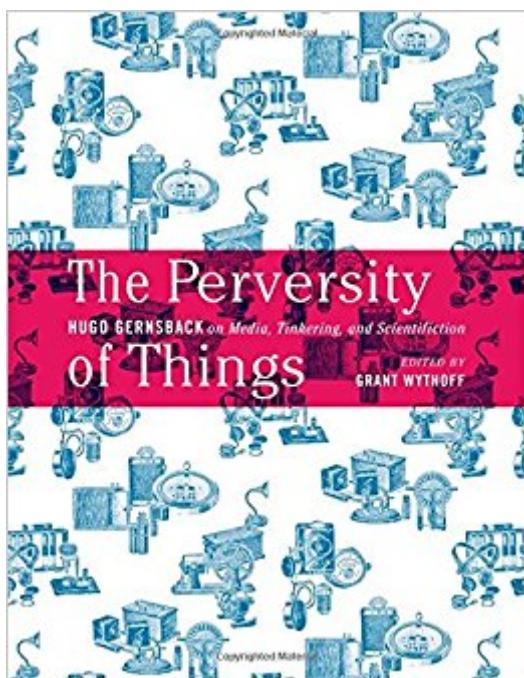


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The Perversity Of Things: Hugo Gernsback On Media, Tinkering, And Scientifiction (Electronic Mediations)



Synopsis

In 1905, a young Jewish immigrant from Luxembourg founded an electrical supply shop in New York. This inventor, writer, and publisher Hugo Gernsback would later become famous for launching the first science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*, in 1926. But while science fiction's annual Hugo Awards were named in his honor, there has been surprisingly little understanding of how the genre began among a community of tinkerers all drawn to Gernsback's vision of comprehending the future of media through making. In *The Perversity of Things*, Grant Wythoff makes available texts by Hugo Gernsback that were foundational both for science fiction and the emergence of media studies. Wythoff argues that Gernsback developed a means of describing and assessing the cultural impact of emerging media long before media studies became an academic discipline. From editorials and blueprints to media histories, critical essays, and short fiction, Wythoff has collected a wide range of Gernsback's writings that have been out of print since their magazine debut in the early 1900s. These articles cover such topics as television; the regulation of wireless/radio; war and technology; speculative futures; media-archaeological curiosities like the dynamophone and hypnobioscope; and more. All together, this collection shows how Gernsback's publications evolved from an electrical parts catalog to a full-fledged literary genre. *The Perversity of Things* aims to reverse the widespread misunderstanding of Gernsback within the history of science fiction criticism. Through painstaking research and extensive annotations and commentary, Wythoff reintroduces us to Gernsback and the origins of science fiction.

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"Grant Wythoff's splendid work of scholarship dispels the dank, historic mists of a literary subculture with starkly factual archival research. An amazing vista of electronic media struggle is revealed here, every bit as colorful and cranky as Hugo Gernsback's pulp magazines— even the illustrations and footnotes are fascinating. I'm truly grateful for this work and will never think of American science fiction in the same way again." —Bruce Sterling, author, journalist, and critic "Hugo Gernsback was one of the strangest and most weirdly influential minds of the twentieth century, and his story has never before been fully told. Grant Wythoff's *The Perversity of Things* is brilliant and beautiful— indispensable for anyone who wants to understand the collision of technology and culture in which science fiction was born." —James Gleick, author of *Time Travel*

Hugo Gernsback (1884–1967) was a Luxembourgish-American inventor, writer, editor, and magazine publisher who founded the first science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*, in 1926. The annual Hugo Awards for the best works of science fiction and fantasy are named in his honor. Grant Wythoff is a postdoctoral fellow in the Society of Fellows in the Humanities and a lecturer in the department of English and comparative literature at Columbia University.

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