The Society of Text: Hypertext, Hypermedia, and the Social Construction of Information (Information Systems Series)

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This collection of essays continues Barrett's investigations into implementing networked online systems described in his first book "Text, ConText, and HyperText, " with a more focused emphasis on specific hypermedia systems. In four parts the 22 essays take up designing hypertext and hypermedia systems for the online user; textual intervention and collaboration; new roles for writers; and sensemaking and learning in the online environment. In his introduction, Barrett analyzes the design of networked online systems as part of a collaborative process, asserting that the online environment fosters collaboration by using computer technology to support interaction among those who design, use, and write software. The first five essays present a genealogy of hypertext development, assess various hypertext designs, discuss users' wants and needs, and analyze the "rhetoric" of hypertext applications in light of new models for computer-human interaction. Seven essays then take up new, important online systems for information retrieval, document production, and training in the online environment. Included are a first-time full scale analysis of the "Athena Muse" hypermedia system developed at MIT, the hypertext environment "Intermedia, " developed at Brown, the University of Maryland's "Hyperties, " and the "Educational Online System" for document production and training technical writers, now in its second year of use at MIT. New roles for writers and productivity gains provided by online environments are the subject of the next six essays. The final four essays discuss instructional efficiency and the failures of instructional materials. Novel proposals are described for addressing the needsand strategies of learners, for supporting cooperative work in creating, revising, and testing a software program, for evaluating online help systems, and for eliminating ambiguity in online text. Edward Barrett is Lecturer in the Writing Program at MIT. "The Society of Text "is included in the Information Systems series, edited by Michael Lesk.

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