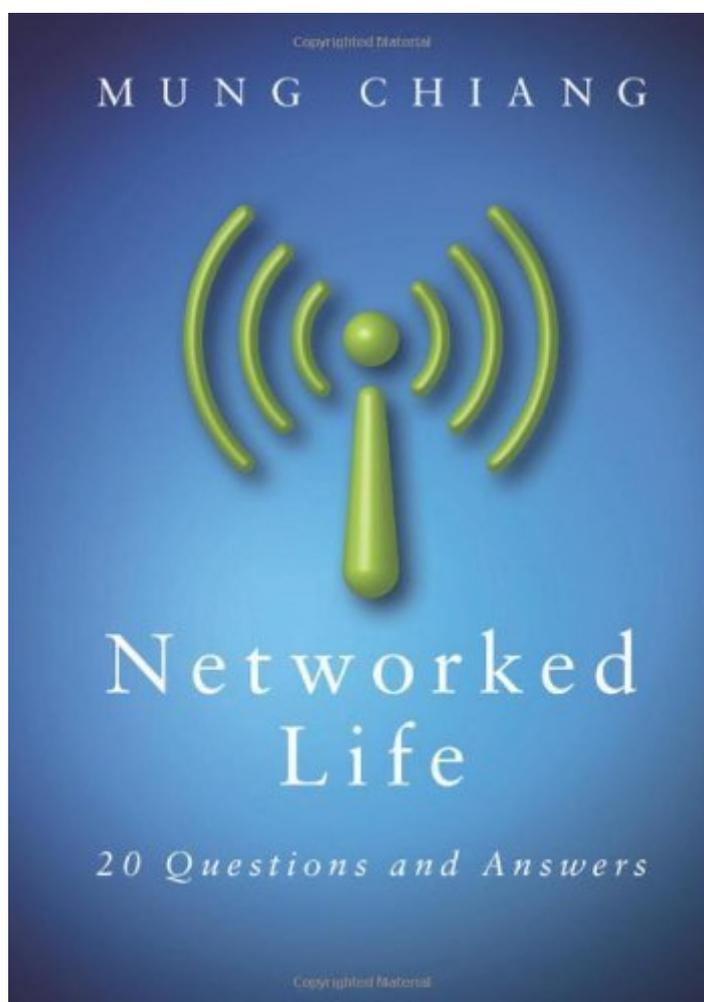


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# Networked Life



## Synopsis

How does Google sell ad space and rank webpages? How does Netflix recommend movies and rank products? How can you influence people on Facebook and Twitter and can you really reach anyone in six steps? Why doesn't the Internet collapse under congestion and does it have an Achilles' heel? Why are you charged per gigabyte for mobile data and how can Skype and BitTorrent be free? How are cloud services so scalable and why is WiFi slower at hotspots than at home? Driven by twenty real-world questions about our networked lives, this book explores the technology behind the multi-trillion dollar Internet and wireless industries. Providing easily understandable answers for the casually curious, alongside detailed explanations for those looking for in-depth discussion, this thought-provoking book is essential reading for students in engineering, science and economics, for network industry professionals and anyone curious about how technological and social networks really work.

## Book Information

File Size: 4395 KB

Print Length: 506 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 1107024943

Simultaneous Device Usage: Up to 4 simultaneous devices, per publisher limits

Publisher: Cambridge University Press; 1 edition (September 10, 2012)

Publication Date: November 29, 2012

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B009ZRNT70

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #713,543 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #182

in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Telecommunications & Sensors > Signal Processing #483 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Telecommunications #2469 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Electrical & Electronics > Electronics

## Customer Reviews

This textbook is based on Professor Chiang's course - Networks: Friends, Money, and Bytes - which is offered at Princeton. As a student at the University, I enrolled. What I realize now more than anything is how little I knew about networking before I started. This book explores the social, economic, and technological networks that we see in our everyday lives. Each chapter poses a question that you've probably asked at one time or another: How does Google rank webpages? Why does Verizon charge me \$10/GB? And How does traffic get through the Internet?, just to give you a flavor. What's unique about this book is how each chapter is presented. Let me explain. Each chapter starts with a "short answer" section, which serves to motivate the question. Professor Chiang gives an overall picture of the topic at hand. Information included in these sections ranges from interesting statistics about how networks have grown, to a conceptual understanding of some of the theory behind the question. He includes a lot of analogies, too. Perhaps my favorite is when he discusses a cocktail party in the first chapter to explain the differences between three communication technologies. Regardless of your background, you could probably read these short answer sections and understand a good portion of them. The only prerequisite here is a desire to learn. Then, each chapter has a "long answer" section, which goes into more detail about how to "answer" the question. These sections tend to include more applied mathematics, and give the reader a strong understanding of how theory is used in practice. The topics here range from an explanation of the fundamental routing protocols that hold the Internet together, to the mathematics behind Google's PageRank algorithm.

This is a tough book to review. On the one hand I want to give it one star and on the other hand I want to give it five stars. Let me explain. The problem is the way that the book is being marketed. In part the description for the book on states, "How does Netflix recommend movies and rank products?... Driven by twenty real-world questions about our networked lives, this book explores the technology behind the multi-trillion dollar Internet and wireless industries. Providing easily understandable answers for the casually curious... for network industry professionals and anyone curious about how technological and social networks really work." Being "casually curious" I ordered the book and was expecting something along the lines of Freakonomics or Malcolm Gladwell's Tipping Point or Outliers, etc. Something that a reasonably intelligent person could understand without being a mathematician or engineer. But that's not what I got and that's not what the book is. The book is a textbook complete with homework assignments. An example: Most people have heard of "Six Degrees of Separation" and maybe even seen the movie where the idea was

prominent, or played around with the six degrees of Kevin Bacon or Brad Pitt websites - now that's casual. The author explores this topic in Chapter 9 entitled "Can I really reach anyone in six steps?" and gives what he calls first a short answer to this question (as he does the other 19 questions in the book in each of their respective chapters) but even those short answers are formal and not at all casual. A portion of the short answer from this chapter reads: "That concerned only with the existence of short paths from local information."

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