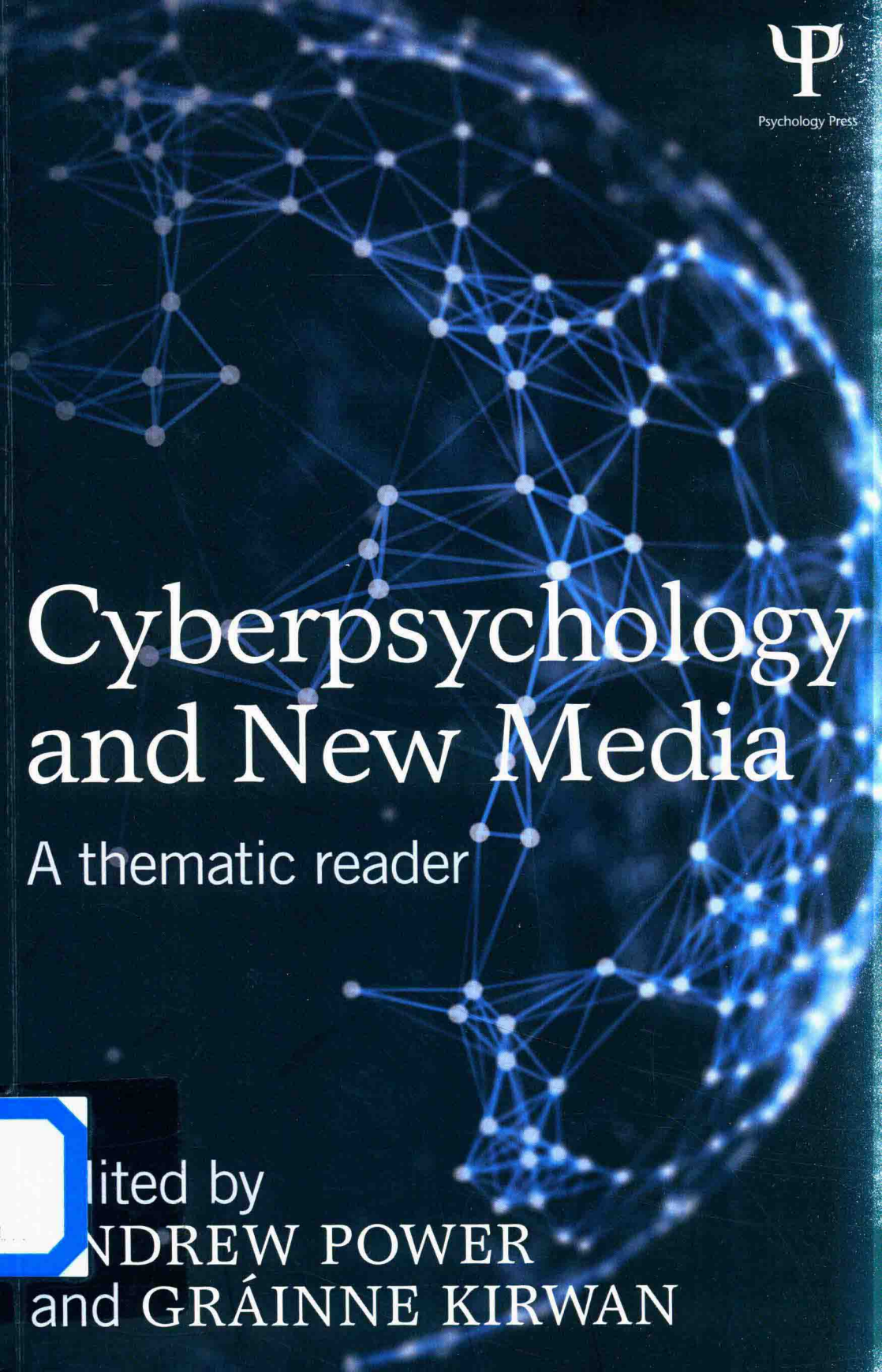
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Cyberpsychology and New Media
A thematic reader
lited by
NDREW POWER
and GRÁINNE KIRWAN

CYBERPSYCHOLOGY AND NEW MEDIA

A thematic reader

Edited by
Andrew Power and
Gráinne Kirwan

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CYBERPSYCHOLOGY AND NEW MEDIA

Cyberpsychology is the study of human interactions with the Internet, mobile computing and telephony, games consoles, virtual reality, artificial intelligence and other contemporary electronic technologies. The field has grown substantially over the past few years, and this book surveys how researchers are tackling the impact of new technology on human behaviour and how people interact with this technology.

Examining topics as diverse as online dating, social networking, online communications, artificial intelligence, health-information seeking behaviour, education online, online therapies and cybercrime, *Cyberpsychology and New Media* provides an in-depth overview of this burgeoning field and allows those with little previous knowledge to gain an appreciation of the diversity of the research being undertaken in the area.

Arranged thematically and structured for accessibility, *Cyberpsychology and New Media* will be essential reading for researchers and students in social psychology and cyberpsychology, and in communication and media studies.

Andrew Power is Head of the Faculty of Film, Art, and Creative Technologies, at the Institute of Art, Design, and Technology in Dun Laoghaire, Ireland. Prior to this Andrew spent many years in the ICT industry working for a number of multinational corporations. Originally trained as an engineer, Andrew holds an MA from the University of Dublin, an MBA from the University of Strathclyde and a doctorate in Governance from Queens University Belfast. Andrew's research interests include social networking, governance and the psychology of online crime.

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Dedicated to the past and present students and staff of the Faculty of Film, Art and Creative Technologies in IADT for their inspiration, enthusiasm and innovation.

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The following contributors are all graduates of the MSc in Cyberpsychology at IADT and co-authored chapters along with the academic writing team. Each chapter was based on their original research work. These graduates are: Mary Aiken, Sinéad Cochrane, Eily Coghlan, Genevieve Dalton, Nicola Fox Hamilton, Graham Gilbert, Kostas Mavropalias, Phelim May, Donna McCabe, Dean McDonnell, Mary O'Brien, Richard O'Connell, Andy Osborn, Kelly Price, Karen Reilly, Mark Siggins and Rory Tierney.

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PREFACE

Andrew Power and Gráinne Kirwan

This book sets out to describe a wide range of research projects in the psychology of new media. It takes as its starting point – and its source for much of the research – the MSc in Cyberpsychology taught in the Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT) in Dublin, Ireland. IADT is a vibrant third-level institution, thriving on new ideas and originality. Specialising in creativity and innovation, programmes embrace the opportunities and challenges of the digital age.

In 2005 staff at IADT began the development of an MSc in Cyberpsychology. The programme grew out of the existing undergraduate BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology, which for many years had explored human computer interaction and the development of an information society. Cyberpsychology is about human–computer interaction, how technology impacts on our behaviour and our psychological state. Cyberpsychology looks at issues of design and usage and seeks to make complex systems more intuitive and easy to use. In addition to looking at how the Internet affects humans, there is a considerable body of research that examines how other technologies can influence us, for example the application of virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) to psychological settings, such as therapy and education.

In 2005 cyberpsychology was still a relatively new field within applied psychology. However, its emphasis on the study of human interactions with the Internet, mobile computing, mobile phones, games consoles, virtual reality and artificial intelligence was a good fit with IADT's existing research and teaching in applied psychology.

The MSc in Cyberpsychology is a ground-breaking taught programme, unique in both Ireland and the world at the time of launch although in the intervening period a number of universities have offered similar programmes. The programme provides graduates with an in-depth understanding of how humans interact with technology and in online environments. The course is wide-ranging, encompassing a variety of perspectives and sub-disciplines within cyberpsychology.

After a number of years teaching this programme it occurred to the editors that there was a body of work that had been developed by successive graduating students of the MSc in Cyberpsychology that was current, relevant and pioneering. It was decided to bring together the academic team who had supervised these theses and, with the cooperation of the graduates themselves, produce an edited volume of the best of this work from the last five years.

Structure of the book

Following a general introduction in Chapter 1 (which defines the discipline of cyberpsychology), the research studies described in the book are divided into four main themes. These are 'Communication', 'Personality and Internet Use', 'Internet Interventions and Therapies' and 'Internet and Education'. Finally, Chapter 19 explores the contribution of the research in this volume to the field of cyberpsychology and considers how cyberpsychology might respond to future technological advances.

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We would like to thank our many colleagues who contributed chapters to this book and who worked with graduates of the programme to develop their research. They gave their advice generously, and we are honoured to work with such talented and knowledgeable individuals.

We would like to thank the editorial team in Psychology Press. In particular, we would like to thank Michael Fenton, Michael Strang and Sharla Plant for their assistance in bringing this work into print. Their patience and advice has been greatly appreciated. We would also like to thank Vodafone Ireland for their permission to use the screenshots in Figures 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.

As always, we would like to thank our families and friends for their good-humoured understanding of our absences at social occasions due to our incessant tapping away at keyboards. We'd love to promise that we'll stop writing, but we can't!

Finally, we would like to thank the students past, present and future who contribute to the development of this subject through their curiosity, hard work and talent. It is a privilege to teach them, and to watch them push the boundaries of the field in both academia and industry.

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