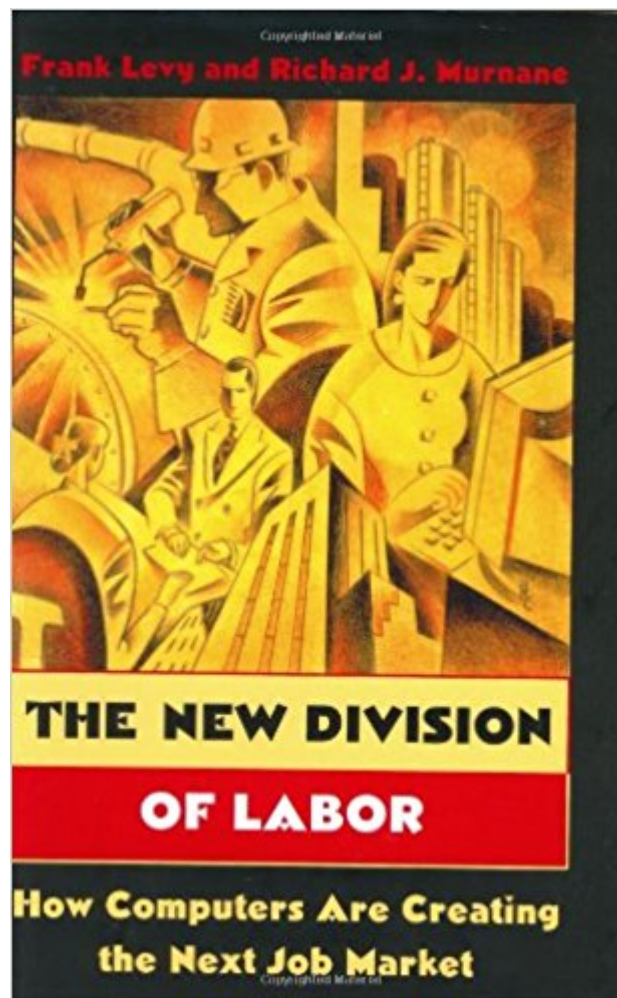




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# The New Division Of Labor: How Computers Are Creating The Next Job Market



## Synopsis

As the current recession ends, many workers will not be returning to the jobs they once held--those jobs are gone. In *The New Division of Labor*, Frank Levy and Richard Murnane show how computers are changing the employment landscape and how the right kinds of education can ease the transition to the new job market. The book tells stories of people at work--a high-end financial advisor, a customer service representative, a pair of successful chefs, a cardiologist, an automotive mechanic, the author Victor Hugo, floor traders in a London financial exchange. The authors merge these stories with insights from cognitive science, computer science, and economics to show how computers are enhancing productivity in many jobs even as they eliminate other jobs--both directly and by sending work offshore. At greatest risk are jobs that can be expressed in programmable rules--blue collar, clerical, and similar work that requires moderate skills and used to pay middle-class wages. The loss of these jobs leaves a growing division between those who can and cannot earn a good living in the computerized economy. Left unchecked, the division threatens the nation's democratic institutions. The nation's challenge is to recognize this division and to prepare the population for the high-wage/high-skilled jobs that are rapidly growing in number--jobs involving extensive problem solving and interpersonal communication. Using detailed examples--a second grade classroom, an IBM managerial training program, Cisco Networking Academies--the authors describe how these skills can be taught and how our adjustment to the computerized workplace can begin in earnest.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As computers make inroads on every aspect of business, will people cease to matter? That's the underlying question of this fascinating examination of the new labor market. In lucid prose, Levy and Murnane—economics professors at MIT and Harvard, respectively, and co-authors of the 1996 bestseller *Teaching the New Basic Skills*—present their answer, and their expectations regarding how computers will affect future wages and job distributions. They begin by debunking the common perception that computers eliminate jobs; the truth, they say, is that "computers are Janus-faced, helping to create jobs even as they destroy jobs." Supported by trend data—clearly laid out in charts, graphs and extensive footnotes—they argue that every technical advance since the introduction of computers to the workplace "shifts works away from routine tasks and towards tasks requiring expert thinking and complex communication." Levy and Murnane also assert that, while it is easy to point to all the new service economy jobs that involve standing behind fast-food counters, the majority of newly created jobs have put workers behind desks, in control of computers and in front of other humans where they are asked to use cognitive skills that outstrip any computer's capability. But if the replacement of humans by computers isn't a realistic crisis, the authors do point out another looming problem: a possible shortage in properly trained workers. Blue-collar and clerical workers displaced by computers already have a difficult time adjusting to the requirements of the new high-wage jobs, and, if educational curriculums aren't changed to reflect the market's demand for sophisticated thinking and communication, students may graduate without the skills they need either. Readers interested in labor and technology shouldn't be put off by this book's dull cover art. Its contents are anything but boring. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Behind all the angst about computers and outsourcing destroying American livelihoods lies a story about economic change and its effect on workers. With welcome clarity, brevity, and insight, Levy and Murnane tell us how to make sense of the time in which we live."--David Wessel, "Capital" columnist, Wall Street Journal "In their brilliant new book *The New Division of Labor: How Computers Are Creating the Next Job Market*, Frank Levy and Richard J. Murnane write that the future belongs to people who excel at expert thinking (solving problems for which there are no rules-based solutions) and complex communication (interacting with people to acquire information, understand what that information means and persuade others of its implications for action)."--ComputerWorld "A concise and easily accessible exploration of how the computer has

shifted the demands for certain types of skills. Unlike the sky-is-falling commentators of the left and the technology-will-solve-all-problems cheerleaders of the right, Levy and Murnane use history, anecdotes and statistical analysis to delineate how technology will change the nature of work."--Washington Post "[A] fascinating book. Not since the mathematical economist Truman Bewley interviewed 300 business executives and labor leaders for *Why Wages Don't Fall* during a Recession have sophisticated economists waded so deeply into the real-world circumstances of the important problem they are seeking to understand."--David Warsh, [economicprincipals.com](http://economicprincipals.com)

"Remember that barely one-third of New York City's eighth-graders can read and do basic math. Then, read this book."--Nicole Gelinas, *New York Post*

"Frank Levy and Richard J. Murnane have written a very readable introduction to some key issues facing US workers in an increasingly informational economy. . . . [R]eaders exploring these ideas for the first time will find this an engaging and provocative introduction to an important set of political-economic processes that continue to bring information technology and human labor together, for better or for worse."--Greg Downey, *International Review of Social History*

I returned to this book after almost 10 years since it's initial publication, mainly because of the leaps in technology that have occurred since then. It is funny to see a picture of a Palm Pilot when so many people now would not have known what one was, never mind my hand held Psion machine from years earlier. My thought of this book is driven by more of a concern of something I see everyday, which is the failure of a lot of businesses to capitalize on new technology. In retail, a brief visit to an Apple store before visiting a more typical retail outlet suggests that Apple is ahead of the competition who trail significantly, but also that Apple itself, does not use it's own technology in a radical way. This book is serious and interesting and approaches it's concerns in a way which suggests that resources are being squandered and that our society is not making as much out of this dramatic rise in technology that it could be. The key thing that is not considered by the book is that people who can dream and think the unthinkable are crucial to leverage the potential of technological developments. Think of Facebook for example. There are people who could see at once that Facebook has advantages in the spread of consumer knowledge about products. In the youth market the sharing of information about bands and other media through Facebook could have been used in a direct fashion to promote the things that people liked. Instead, years later, the now huge Facebook institution is gingerly putting its toes into the retail market through enabling people to buy things. Similarly the book implies that alienation for those who cannot get to grips with technology because they lack basic skills of literacy, numeracy and communications, will be

divorced from the new knowledge based economy and be cast aside with all of the attendant problems they will face into the distant future. One thing which I think upon reflection should have been included is the fact that people are not just workers or consumers is that they are people and while the technology exists for people to do well in their chosen employments or causes, the technology itself cannot replace people. Video conferencing and Skype can assist in meetings across thousands of miles and numerous timezones, but ultimately there are situations where a physical presence is a necessity. Technology has brought about massive changes in the workforce but there are a lot of small and medium enterprises which carry on as they have done for years with only minor changes courtesy of technology. I suppose that what I am trying to articulate is the gap between technology and it's uses. It may have been obvious that telephones and computers could converge into mobile devices but I am convinced that there are untapped opportunities waiting to be discovered by people with imagination and ideas and there really does not seem to be any way to teach those things except by encouraging enterprise and initiative, taking risks and finding out how those risks can be financed and supported. By the way I found this book to be a surprising source of ideas, not dry and academic at all.

This is another book on the issue of Man vs. machine. Compared with the book *Race Against the Machine* which discusses more theoretical framework of the issue, this book is more practical with narrower focus. The authors start with the question "what kind of tasks do computer perform better than humans?" --- rule based logic. On the other hand, humans are good at expert thinking and complex communication. The authors discuss their implications on the job market, with very interesting statistics. They also present some examples of how to train people with skills necessary for their future. I truly enjoy the book.

## ROBOT WAR

I was a little lost.

for a host , I don't get excited about knives BUT this product is WONDERFUL! as soon as you pick it up....you KNOW this is a sturdy professional product! there is NO OTHER product in any department store like this one.....ITS WELL WORTH THE PRICE!!! 5 stars! best service, patient. love it . delivery on time receive it next day .

If you only read one book this year, read this book. It will change the way you think about work, education and the global economy. Murnane and Levy ask two fundamental questions: What do computers do better than people? (A: rules-based thinking) What do people do better than computers? (A: pattern recognition) Much of the work of the industrial economy was rules-based, both on the assembly line and in the manager's office. Most of the work in the innovation economy is based on pattern recognition, including what Murnane and Levy call expert thinking and complex communication. Their research shows that these are the skills for which demand is growing in the economy at all rungs of the job ladder. I've found their argument so compelling that I have purchased copies of the book for most of the top policy-makers in my home state of Rhode Island. The ideas in the book are starting to shape the discussion of school reform and workforce development here. In particular, we are concerned that our school system, like those in every other state, is still producing labor for a rules-based industrial economy that no longer exists. While it's possible to absorb rules-based thinking from a book or a lecture, it's difficult to teach pattern recognition skills in a pure classroom setting. You learn to recognize patterns by actually doing it the company of someone who is already very good at it. It's the essence of good experiential learning and mentoring, which can no longer be thought of as a luxury in the education system. If we want to produce the workforce we need for an innovation economy, we'll need to make experiential learning a part of every K-12 and college experience.

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