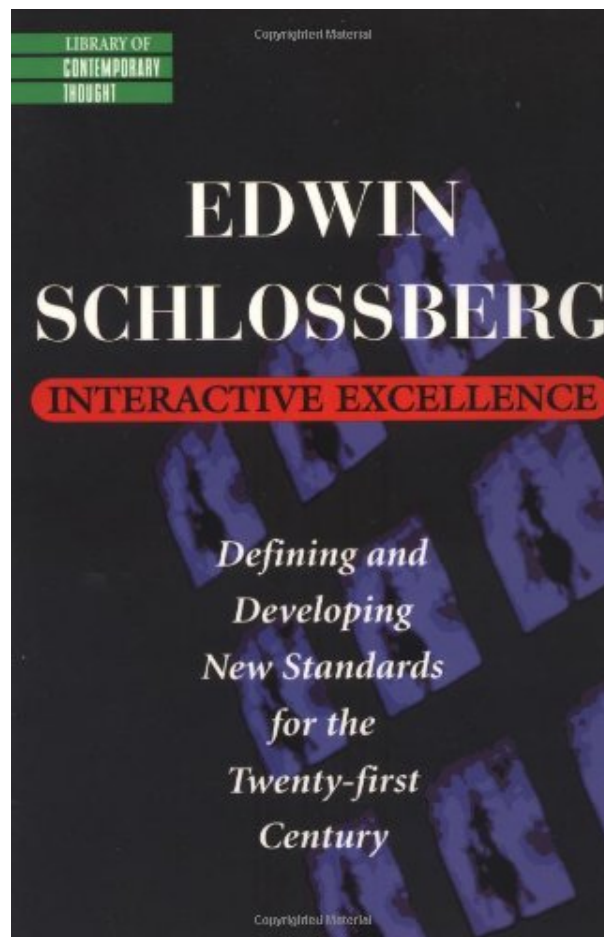
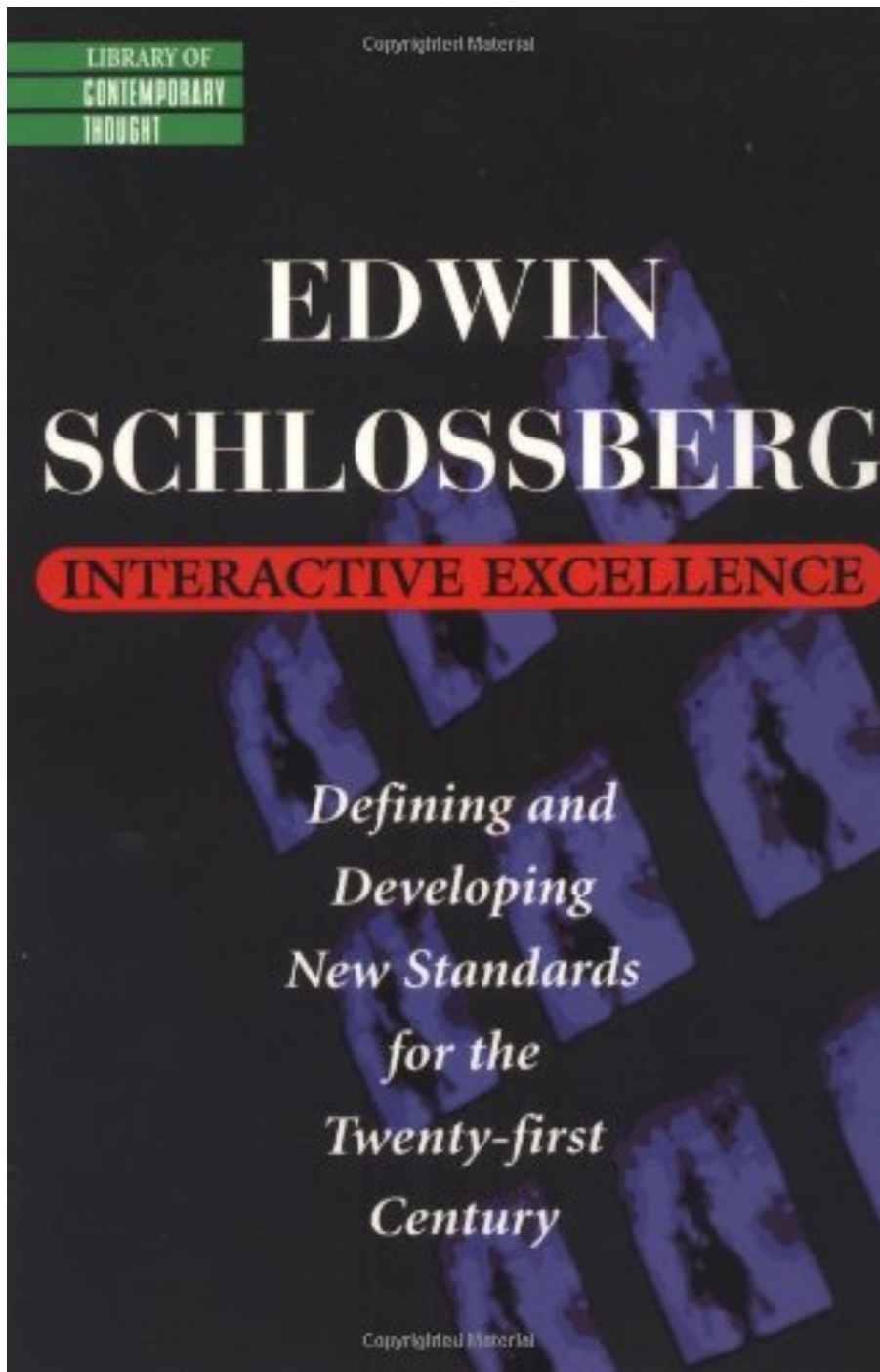


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I recently spoke to Ed Schlossberg at a party about the future of books in this quickly changing medium. He's incredibly knowledgeable about the new technology and told me about a computer screen that's the thickness of a piece of paper--that you can actually download a book onto and more or less wave a magic wand in order to turn a page. A few nights later I saw this technology on the nightly news--it's absolutely breathtaking. Like Ed's book, it makes you wonder what our lives will contain fifty years from now.

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9 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Dumbing down our society

By Theodore A. Rushton

One of the great features of America is its ability to express the great cultural icons of the past in terms that the layman can understand and appreciate, a skill that ranges from Walt Disney's 'Fantasia' to the more recent Jerry Springer show.

Edwin Schlossberg is a fan of Springer, not Fantasia. Springer, after all, offers classic Shakespearean themes of love, hate, betrayal, revenge and triumph in the form of risqué snippets about real people edited into a highly profitable 47 or so minutes. He's got all of the elements of Shakespeare, except he crams them into a bleeped-out version of what used to be called "tabloid trash."

For the average viewer, the essence of a Springer show is, "See, some people are dumber than you." It's the same formula supermarket tabloids use, reassuring their readers that the rich and famous led lives that are as miserable or worse than any reader. Misery loves company, and stupidity loves a crowd. Both vastly outnumber the elites of society.

Schlossberg is popular and powerfully influential. He knows how to draw a crowd. Forget about intellect, his emphasis is the creation of empty fun. He appeals to museums that want thousands of admission fees, but don't care whether the patrons learn a thing. Life is no longer about education, it's about playing little games in a setting that offers absolutely no danger of intellectual exercise.

He is an astute, engaging and perceptive writer; the opening chapters of his book dissect the impact of new technology upon old culture. Then, his analysis falls apart; instead of educating people to appreciate the quality of excellence, he pretends the Beatles equal Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. A generation ago, the

Beatles might have been the first step on the road to musical knowledge; today, people such as Schlossberg thinks that's as much as anyone needs to learn.

The result, in the media, in museums, in symphony orchestras, in dramatic theater, is a dumbing down of content. His goal isn't to uplift the masses to a new level of excellence; instead, it's telling people there's great merit in the lowest common denominator. He's very successful at it; he founded a company called `Edwin Schlossberg Inc.' that advises cultural institutions how to reach the masses. To use a sports metaphor, his approach isn't to offer a finely tuned discussion on the physics of the curve ball; instead, he says if you play and understand sandlot ball, you'll have a better appreciation of major league baseball.

He may be right. For too long, the social elites looked down their noses at anyone with a lesser understanding of high culture; Schlossberg is an expert at discovering the simplest elements of culture and using them to explain overall themes. No one can pretend the old methods succeeded; leaving the failures of the past behind, Schlossberg explains how the twenty-first century will build a new cultural awareness from the ground up.

There are dozens of institutions and attractions that are ineffectively welded to the past; this book explains the new emphasis on understanding for the masses instead of privilege for the elites. The older generation may be horrified at the prospect of the Beatles and Beethoven; but, more progressive people will understand how lowbrow culture inevitably leads some to highbrow excellence.

In other words, the world has a massive range of attractions. The ones that will survive and thrive are those that learn to appeal to the people. Schlossberg is an excellent guide. Or, a cultural Philistine.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

How interactive design helps people make choices

By A Customer

Schlossberg's book, at first a bit ethereal, comes solidly down to earth in the last third, where he describes the interactive exhibits he has created in his quest to educate the masses to make sophisticated choices. The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, for example, faced with an indifferent public and declining audience, turn to Schlossberg for assistance. Drawing inspiration from Indonesian shadow-puppet theatre, in which the audience not only watches from their seats in front, but over the course of the play wander backstage to check out the puppet masters and the props, Schlossberg devises an exhibit which will bring people "backstage" to the creative process of music making. The CSO project encourages visitors to compose their own bits of music electronically, then join these fragments with others to make up a virtual orchestra, thereby making the audience creators of their own symphony. The experience of working through this exhibit, Schlossberg believes, will give neophytes the critical skills and knowledge needed to enjoy what had been unfamiliar and difficult music.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Contradictions in logic and example

By magicjim@islc.net Jim Callahan

After reading Interactive Excellence, I found this book contains excessive contradictions in both logic and example. Mr. Schlossberg does an exceedingly competent job in his chosen field, but seems ill equipped to discuss his topic to the depth it needs to be examined. This book could be edited down to a good two pages that would be informative. Possibly to use as a preface to a discussion. If you think I am wrong, let me know. I would be more than happy to expand the level of the authors understanding on the subject over coffee and doughnuts sometime. Heck, he might even convince me the last twenty years of audience research I have done was wasted time. Signed...Master Magician and Paranormalist JIM CALLAHAN

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