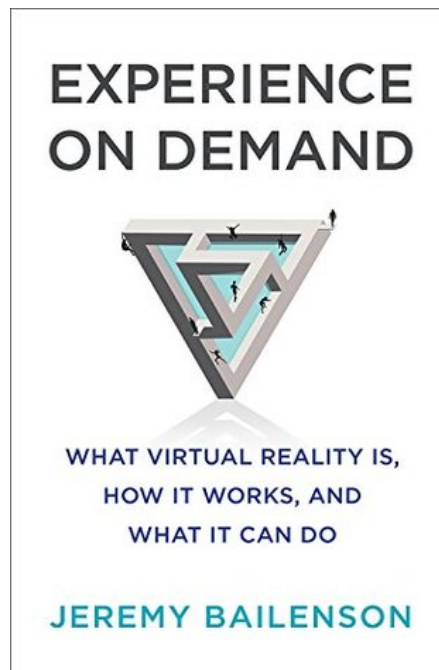




Experience on Demand: What Virtual Reality Is, How It Works, and What It Can Do

Jeremy Bailenson

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An in-depth look at virtual reality and how it can be harnessed to improve our everyday lives.

Virtual reality is able to effectively blur the line between reality and illusion, pushing the limits of our imagination and granting us access to any experience imaginable. With well-crafted simulations, these experiences, which are so immersive that the brain believes they're real, are already widely available with a VR headset and will only become more accessible and commonplace. But how does this new medium affect its users, and does it have a future beyond fantasy and escapism?

In *Experience on Demand*, Jeremy Bailenson draws on two decades spent researching the psychological effects of VR and other mass media to help readers understand this powerful new tool. He offers expert guidelines for interacting with VR and describes the profound ways this technology can be put to use—not to distance ourselves from reality, but to enrich our lives and influence us to treat others, the environment, and even ourselves better. In the world of VR, a football quarterback plays a game against a competing team hundreds of times before even stepping onto the field; members of the United Nations embody a young girl in a refugee camp going through her day-to-day life; and veterans once again walk through the streets where they had experienced trauma.

There are dangers and many unknowns in using VR, but it also can help us hone our performance, recover from trauma, improve our learning and communication abilities, and enhance our empathic and imaginative capacities. Like any new technology, its most incredible uses might be waiting just around the corner. *Experience on Demand* is the definitive look at the risks and potential of VR—a must-read for navigating both the virtual and the physical worlds ahead.

Experience on Demand: What Virtual Reality Is, How It Works, and What It Can Do Details

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Tifnie says

Experience on Demand is a 10 star book. While virtual reality is slowing coming to mainstream, give it 5 years and it will be in every household and it will be of better quality than your \$20 VR headsets. It's a natural progression.

Experience on Demand talks about the good VR experience. Experiences that help shape global awareness. Imagine deep sea diving and witnessing the effects of acidification on the coral reefs.

Experiences that help bring people closer together rather than isolation like we are currently facing. Imagine visiting a person from another country that you have never met and having a one on one conversation with them and seeing their world. Experiences that have zero cost and even less of a human footprint. Think of climbing Mount Everest and not leaving trash behind or the human bodies that are still on that mountain of past climbers. Experiences that help heal patients both emotionally and physically. VR is currently working with PTSD patients, helping them face certain emotions in a safe environment.

Did you know Oculus VR, founded by a 21 year old self taught engineer, was bought by Mark Zuckerberg for over \$2 billion in 2014? \$2 BILLION!

Karen Lu says

i approach most books with some degree of escapism; i read to get lost in some beautiful world. this was not one of those books. i believe, however, that this book was important for me to read. it opened my eyes in both directions to the way that my current work in VR tech can be used to heal and harm the world in terrifying ways. full immersion, the holy grail of VR, influences our brains in a way that no other media format has achieved. VR can be used to spread the ultimate propaganda/fake news, to train the general public in tactics of violence, to change the memories of children (children experience reality blurring more than adults do). VR can also be used to help victims of PTSD to access their memories and heal, to distract the minds of hospitalized patients from unbearable pain, to build actionable empathy for humans and the planet. but even that last example is a kind of propaganda, i suppose. Bailenson's context on the industry runs deeper than the latest VR trends; his lab was creating VR experiences before it was affordable. this makes his ramblings more knowledgeable than those of the average young person just breaking into the space.

Frank Harvey says

There is some good information in this book, and I hesitate to give it too low a score. However, at a certain point in the book the author begins delving into topics that are unrelated to virtual reality except tangentially to the extent that they could potentially be experienced by VR. A summary of such topics would not have been bad, but I felt like I was reading pages and pages on topics like climate change when I got this book to read about virtual reality. I ended up having to stop and take it back.

The information that's there is good, but I was looking for something a bit more focused on the overarching topic.

Laura Chapman says

Found this on the new books shelf, I'm glad I picked it up. Bailenson talks about the potential of VR to impact people, drawing on his own research in the field. The book is aspirational, only touching on the potential harms of VR technology and talking at length about social impact opportunities for VR technology, for example to teach about environmental issues or for workplace diversity training. Definitely not a technical book, but interesting musings on where VR might go in the future.

NormaCenva says

Most of the books that I read get donated afterwards. This one will stay in my personal library, no questions asked. It is a very useful overview of many matters relating to ever-expanding VR. Both practical and fantastical matters are explored, and many useful examples are shared. Future is VR and this book is a great read for anyone interested in what can be our reality very, very soon!

Thijs Pepping says

Good overview of all the possibilities of VR. Nuanced: a lot of pro's and con's of VR. Interesting thoughts about the near and further future of VR.

Spoiler: Personal Highlights

- Presence - that peculiar sense of "being there" unique to VR> p. 3
- VR is closing the gap between 'real' experience and mediated experience. p. 6
- "It's an entirely new medium, with its own unique characteristics and psychological effects, and it will utterly change how we interact with the (real) world around us, and with other people." p. 11
- Advantage of VR: because users' brains are treating the experience they are having as psychologically real, they are physiologically aroused in a way that is similar to what occurs during real experience. p. 37
- VR makes Embodied cognition possible: muscle movements and other sensory experience help us understand the world around us. p. 38
- Negotiation, public speaking, carpentry, machine repair, dance, sports, musical instruction - almost any skill can conceivably be improved through virtual instruction How many individuals are not meeting their potential because they lack the access to good instruction and learning tools? p. 41
- a VR experience is often better understood not as a media experience, but as an actual experience, with the attendant results for our behavior. p. 46
- Milgram experiment done in VR with the person ordered to give the shocks knowing the one getting the shocks is a computer generated character. Still they responded the same as in real life. p. 48
- Downsides: behavioral modelling, escapism, overuse (simulator sickness, eyestrain, reality blurring), distraction, VR and kids, p. 74
- VR can evoke great empathy reactions, but it's not magic and doesn't work every time. p. 80
- We are still learning how to create good empathic VR. At least three motives drive people to avoid empathy: trying to avoid emotional suffering, incurring material costs such as having to donate money to help, and worrying about competition by performing weakly at work or in social situations. 3 motives drive

them to approach empathy: doing a good deed, which results in positive affect; strengthening affiliation with in-group members such as friends and family; and wanting others to see one as a good person, called 'social desirability'. p. 97

- "Body transfer" feeling you are someone else in VR, even a cow. p. 105
 - VR and ecotourism: in VR you will always see whales, and not come back empty handed. Better for climate problem and us humans fucking up the world and all. p. 131
 - VR therapy: used after 911, PTSD military, etc. seems really promising p. 141
 - VR as a distraction from pain, for instance needles, phantom pain, or burn victims. p. 154
 - "Mapping one's brain to a virtual body let people have 3 arms for instance. p. 164
 - "VR is going to become a must-have technology when you can simply talk and interact with other people in a virtual space in a way that feels utterly, unspectacularly normal. p. 175
 - "What is the virtual handshake?" -> discussion about gap between real encounters and virtual encounters. Answer is needed before VR social really to take off. p. 188
 - Videochatting with a high resolution avatar of yourself. Less bandwidth needed (avatar = downloaded, only movement data is shown). Plus you can only show the head, no background, and manipulate your avatar. No makeup needed before making a call. p. 199
 - We prefer those who look and sound like we do. People will use this to manipulate VR communications. p. 201
 - So far VR learning is mostly about engaging in the subject, actual learning facts is not a pro yet. p. 244
 - Letting the teachers avatar mimic every students body language individually and automatic.. Automatic filtering a mad or disappointed expression with a calm face on the avatar. What does this mean for authentic relationships? p. 246
 - Building good VR content: 1) ask yourself: does this need to be in VR? is the experience impossible, dangerous, expensive, or counterproductive in real life? Save VR for the special moments 2) Don't make people sick, keep the special moment short. 3) Be safe.
-

Ramin says

Here's a couple excerpts of my review of Jeremy Bailenson's book for Nature magazine. If you're interested, please check out the whole review:
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d4158...>

You strap on the head-mounted display, slip on the gloves, tune your ears to the surround sound — and suddenly you are facing a plank jutting out over an abyss. The depths here are virtual, but not everyone can force themselves to jump.

This is just one program developed by psychologist Jeremy Bailenson to demonstrate the capabilities of virtual reality (VR). As a leading researcher in the field, Bailenson crafts new worlds that feel real, to explore their beneficial uses. In *Experience On Demand*, he tours the myriad applications that he and others are developing. After a great deal of hype by science-fiction film writers and video-game designers in the 1990s, the technology now finally seems poised for widespread use. Eventually, as Bailenson details, it could transform work, schools, hospitals and more...

...Bailenson mentions escapist, excessive use of VR as a major risk. Because of "simulator sickness" and eye strain, which can develop after just 20 minutes, this has not yet been studied in humans. It is as yet a speculative concern, explored more in film and fiction. In addition, there are concerns that violent programs, such as VR versions of first-person-shooter video games, might encourage antisocial or aggressive behaviour in the real world. But Bailenson gives such concerns short shrift. Nor does he call for transparency or

oversight of VR companies, or for regulations to ensure consumers' safety. He seems confident that developers and users will know how to use the technology responsibly.

Indeed, Bailenson is, by his own admission, "bullish" about VR; he recognizes that he might have "drunk the Silicon Valley Kool-Aid". That relentless positivity means that the book can lack nuance, as if VR can solve the world's problems...

Irina says

It is a nice book for those who are not very familiar with VR. It is easier to read than other scientific books or papers, has a lot of examples and personal experience stories. It also contains some scientific research information and references. Nevertheless, for somebody who has already been reading scientific stuff on the topic it is somehow superficial.

Susan Baumgartner says

Lots of ideas to ponder. I found it especially interesting that Dr Bailenson acknowledged that students they've polled would stick w the testing systems that exist today versus having all the data points VR could offer as a way to show understanding. Are we creatures of habit or do we fear deeper probes & like to capitalize on playing the system? I also was struck by the idea that engagement & learning occur in different moments- listening is a huge part of learning.

I liked how Dr Bailenson states that we should use & save VR for what is impossible, dangerous & expensive but also exclude what you *wouldn't* do IRL. Extremely important concept.

Nixon says

Many thanks Jeremy!

Sharing your brilliantly accomplished insight into the current world and futuristic opportunity around "Virtual Reality" is awe inspiring, and I believe a true gift to society. One could imagine anyone who reads "Experience on Demand" now has ideas about how they can change their and others negative perspectives into positive life changing aspirations, and also have some really cool new experiences!

Nixon Carruthers
San Francisco, California

Thomas says

Great overview of current VR technology and where to go from here, written with great insight by an expert in the field. Good entry level non-fiction. Just enough doomsaying to be quite entertaining.

Sam Tornio says

Crystal clear introduction to the subject that offers avenues for deeper study while never getting bogged down by details. Ideal for everyone from the casually interested to the nascently obsessed. Pairs well with Jaron Lanier's Dawn of the New Everything.

Anthony Madle says

A MUST read for anyone even interested in virtual reality. After reading this, it is easy to see why Bailenson is one of the world's top VR experts. 10 out of 10!

Shawn Upton says

The promise of a burgeoning, untapped world to explore was more interesting than the execution (which goes a little bit short on topics you'd like to know more on and a little long on those that you can do without).

The focus on VR's use in sports and education were highlights for me. I was underwhelmed and skeptical of the empathy experiences that would be provided.

Heather says

Pretty good introduction to VR - the experiments in VR are really fascinating. I enjoyed reading Bailenson's insights too, and I love his enthusiasm for VR. Strange that he didn't mention AR or MR at all though. My goodness he does mention so many times that he got tenure at Stanford - I would have given the book 4 stars but for his constant showing off!
