

The Devouring Fungus: Tales of the Computer Age

Karla Jennings

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#3808013 in Books 1990-11-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.30 x .80 x 5.50l, .63 #File Name: 0393307328240 pages | File size: 36.Mb

Karla Jennings : The Devouring Fungus: Tales of the Computer Age before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Devouring Fungus: Tales of the Computer Age:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It's full of good stories, but I REALLY wish there were more ...By CustomerI read this book over 20 years ago and remembered it fondly, so I tracked it down. It's full of good stories, but I REALLY wish there were more details and/or citations. I suspect a lot of the stories are apocryphal, and that's fine - they're still entertaining - but I also wish it were easier to tell them from the factual ones.0 of 3 people found the

following review helpful. Amusing book on computer "folktales." By A Customer A book about the folktales and legends of the computer world. Interesting for the various anecdotes and the clearly written history of the beginnings of computers and the society surrounding them. (This "review" originally appeared in First Impressions Installment One [...]) 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Very funny; not just for computer people. By A Customer This book is a real find. It is in some ways a version of "urban legends", those funny/amazing stories that everyone swears are true, that it happened to a friend (or a friend of a friend), or that they heard about it from some other reliable source. The thing is, *The Devouring Fungus* has both real and legend-type stories. Besides the stories themselves -- certainly things you'll want to send along to friends and families -- the author weaves a nice narrative.

"Zooks! At last, the culture, folklore, and mythology of computing. Here's the digital dirt from our computer age...collected and retold by Karla Jennings." ?Cliff Stoll, author of *The Cuckoo's Egg* Are you someone who'd use a RAM chip as fertilizer? Do you think that the best way to boot up a computer is with a steel toe? Then *The Devouring Fungus* is the book for you. Anyone who's ever had anything to do with computers?from the sophisticated hacker to the confused office worker to the unsuspecting parent who finally relented to the kid's demand for a PC?will find something here to chuckle about.

From Publishers Weekly Anyone who has ever had a day's worth of computer work vanish into a black hole will relish this assortment of anecdotes about the mysterious machines and their devotees. Freelance journalist Jennings delves into history, recalling IBM's origins, the author of the first program (Ada Byron, daughter of Lord Byron) and source of the word "nerd" (Dr. Seuss). There is an insider's glimpse of Silicon Valley, where "People stop you in the street and ask for a dollar to buy a floppy." There are the games programmers play on users, like the accountant who searched for a water drain under the desk when a prank program led his computer to mimic a washing machine. High-tech cat and mouse is equally inventive: alerted by an unexplained charge in his user account, astrophysicist Clifford Stoll tracked down a spy ring that had gained access to Defense Department data (see Stoll's *The Cuckoo's Egg*, nonfiction reprints below). And we're reassured that computers don't do everything well: an English-French translation program missed the point when it rendered "Out of sight, out of mind" as "Blind, insane." The book is illustrated with cartoons by Garry Trudeau, Rich Tennant and others. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal A custodian plugs his electric floor polisher into the military base mainframe to buff the computer room floor, causing the system to crash every few days. The officer in charge wisely reports to his annoyed superiors that it is simply a buffer problem. This is one of the many appealing stories, legends, and myths found in Jennings's unique history of the computer age. The author, a freelance writer and former computer illiterate, presents with humor and pathos modern-day tall tales of technoweenies, computer criminals, and viruses. One glitch is hard to overlook: Cray Supercomputer's home is Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, not Minnesota; and hackers may have heard these yarns before. Otherwise, a nice addition for public libraries whose patrons think UNIX still means harem guards.- Joe Accardi, Triodyne Safety Information Ctr., Niles, Ill. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. About the Author Karla Jennings lives in Decatur, Georgia, where she is working on a novel.