New Susskind book: The Future of the Professions

*The Future of the Professions* is a much-anticipated new book from Richard Susskind and his son Daniel Susskind. It is now available from Oxford University Press. On first reading it lives up to my highest expectations; I warmly commend *The Future of the Professions* to all who practise and value and benefit from professional life. *The Future of the Professions* is the first book to challenge the relevance of the professions in the 21st century. As one would expect from a pre-eminent technology researcher and thinker of the stature of Richard Susskind, the book develops an argument as to why and how technology will transform the work of all professional practitioners.

To quote the OUP website: “This book predicts the decline of today’s professions and describes the people and systems that will replace them. In an Internet society…we will neither need nor want doctors, teachers, accountants, architects, the clergy, consultants, lawyers, and many others, to work as they did in the 20th century.”

**Information asymmetry no longer protects traditional professions**

The Susskinds show the monopolies governed by state-regulated licensure – the grand bargains – that provide today’s professionals with economic privileges and related duties are fast approaching their last days. They argue “our current professions are antiquated, opaque and no longer affordable, and that the expertise of the best is enjoyed only by a few”. Six new models for producing and distributing expertise in society are posited – all already exist to a degree.

In ‘*Why professionalism is still relevant today*’, my 2010 essay, I argued that the asymmetry of information that characterises the intellectual power of professionals and distinguishes them from others (‘lay’ people) is rapidly waning. This phenomenon means that the definition of professionalism and the role of professionals in society must be renegotiated to ensure society continues to benefit.

The Susskinds’ book develops this and related themes brilliantly, providing direction (and hope) for the many institutions of professionalism.

In a later post, after I have digested the book more thoroughly, I will elaborate on what I see as the practical implications for practitioners in all professions. I will also comment on lines of further enquiry opened up by the Susskinds work and on a couple of interesting omissions.
The Future of the Professions is also available as an e-book from Amazon.

Law Council of Australia presents a special event featuring Richard Susskind


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