

In a nutshell

Future Shop

“*Future Shop* is well-intentioned, well-reasoned and intentionally provocative—Snider and Ziporyn deliver on their promise to remake the very idea of consumerism.”

—Jonathan Kirsch,
Los Angeles Times Book Review

J.H. Snider, MBA, Ph.D., is the President of iSolon.org, a non-profit policy institute. He is a former Shorenstein Center Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, a Fellow and Co-Founder of the Spectrum Policy Program at the New America Foundation, a Congressional Fellow in Communications and Public Policy, and Harvard Business School Non-Profit Fellow. He has an M.B.A. from the Harvard Business School and a Ph.D. from Northwestern University.

Terra Ziporyn, Ph.D., is an historian of science and award-winning science and medical writer. A former associate editor of *JAMA*, she has written on a wide range of health and medical issues in both professional and popular publications, including *Business Week* and *Consumer Reports* and has received science writing fellowships from AAAS, the American Chemical Society, and the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole. Her other books include *The New Harvard Guide to Women's Health* and *Alternative Medicine for Dummies*.

The past fifteen years have witnessed a revolution in e-commerce that has em-

powered consumers. Online sales grew from essentially 0% of GNP in 1992 to 3.5% in 2007. Giant online clearinghouses of product information, such as on Amazon and eBay, sprung from nowhere. Advertising as a percentage of GNP declined seven of the past eight years. Online third party reviews of products, mostly product reviews written by other consumers, which were non-existent in 1992, were used by 58.7% of consumers during the 2007 Holiday season. The number of products readily available to consumers skyrocketed while the incidence of misleading retail price and product claims plummeted.

Future Shop: How New Technologies Will Change the Way We Shop and What We Buy predicted much of this revolution in 1992. In 1992, average online data speeds were less than a thousandth what they are today, the world wide web had been invented only 13 months before, and online shopping, to the extent it existed, was text-based. Still, *Future Shop* could discern the implications of empowering consumer with better product information.

But *Future Shop* also argued that the free market was inadequate to complete the revolution. To complete the revolution, a “New Consumerism” was needed, including laws overhauling telecommunications policy and facilitating trust in Internet transactions.

In the new preface to this Authors Guild reprint of *Future Shop*, Snider and Ziporyn recount the first decades of the revolution and argue that now is the time to lay the public policy foundations for its completion.



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