Most of the other essays offer different perspectives on the future role of robots and AI technologies and their impact on society. The book offers convincing assessments; for example, according to Inman Harvey, research on robotics and AI is in a "transition from . . . a field of overambitious promises with a poor delivery record to . . . a normal science that has become so essential to our everyday world" (p. 137). But some authors deal scientifically with topics that seem to some degree absurd from today's perspective, such as robot self-reproduction or robot life beyond Earth. Robot companionship is discussed and presented as something positive. Such papers raise the question of whether we would enjoy living in such an environment. Because of these contributions, it is important that the ethics concerning research on and application of AI and robotics are addressed by other authors of the book. The final contribution to the essay section is a translation of a newspaper article on the reception of *R.U.R.*, published by Čapek in 1935. He expressly underlined that his aim was not to celebrate mechanical engineering but to present scientific robots. The transition of robots from living beings (in the case of *R.U.R.*) to metal "men" and thus to machines was observed by Čapek "without any great pleasure" (p. 265). This transition rendered Čapek's critique toothless, since questions of equal rights are less important in the case of machines than in the case of living beings.

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Vom Verschwinden der Technik [On the disappearance of technology]

By David Gugerli. Zurich: Chronos, 2024. Pp. 152.

David Gugerli's brief volume on the "disappearance of technology" is the result of thirteen columns that he published in the monthly magazine *Merkur* in 2022–23. *Merkur* is not an academic journal, but it is aimed at an educated audience that wants to learn about different aspects of culture. The columns did not follow any system or chronology; in this volume they are supplemented by notes and images, as well as a short introduction and an essay on the images. The thirteen "marginalia" discuss various topics related to the disappearance of technology, such as the

difference between a loss, which is at least fundamentally noticeable, and a silent disappearance, which may not even have left behind any sources and can therefore hardly be noticed.

The first two chapters deal with space technology. In chapter 1, the starting point is the ephemeral nature of the Apollo 8 mission, which was in strange contrast to the elaborate staging that was necessary to bring the trip to the far side of the moon closer to the earthly television audience. The following chapter then explores the legacy of the space missions, namely space junk, which unfortunately never disappears completely and represents an increasing source of danger for rockets and satellites, meaning that it has to be recorded and mapped at great expense.

The chapter "Circulation" tells the story of a technology that had previously disappeared unnoticed before literally reappearing. The low water level of Lake Zurich in the winter of 1853–54 revealed pile dwellings whose existence had previously been unknown. Gugerli is less interested in the disappearance (or reappearance) of this pile dwelling technology than in how it was integrated into the narrative of the Swiss nation-building process and how the material legacies soon began to circulate in the national and international museum and collector community. This chapter also reveals one of the weaknesses of the book's approach, as the original columns always sought to provide a punch line for the reader. However, these punch lines are not always about the disappearance of technology and are also sometimes quite whimsical bridges between Swiss history and the present.

The next section looks at the scrapping of automobiles, something that happens millions of times every year, and the technically far more complex and rarer "managed retirement" of nuclear warheads. The link to the (failed) destruction of the files of the GDR State Security Service during German reunification is rather loosely connected to this. Gugerli is concerned with the comparison of the relatively simple material recycling of iron or plastic and the difficult or impossible disappearance of both nuclear warheads (due to their material longevity) and "administrative apparatus." The latter example is not convincing, however, as paper can easily be recycled and the destruction of the Stasi files only failed because of a lack of time and the courageous intervention of the GDR civil rights movement.

Further chapters deal with the disappearance of Swiss mountains on nineteenth-century maps; the complete disappearance of top-secret technology; the lack of visibility of the far too numerous artifacts in museum collections; the disappearance of information due to outdated technology; the life cycles and biometaphors of technology; the survival of obsolete technology in coffee table books and the question of whether the Concorde was not already obsolete when it was introduced because it was noisy and failed to offer a sufficient level of social prestige; the notion of tabula rasa in architecture; the contrast between economic losses, which are usually recorded precisely, and the loss of significance of once innovative technology such as

the minidisc and its survival in the realm of technostalgia; and finally the representational machine of absolutist power, which was intended to make the absent ruler particularly present.

This list of diverse topics alone makes it clear that Gugerli's book is not a systematic examination of the disappearance of technology, an undertaking which would have been impossible in just under one hundred pages of text. The book is a hodgepodge of anecdotal stories that, in order to suit the original readership, have not been embedded in the existing state of research. This is not offset by the rather rudimentary addition of notes and references. Readers interested in the history of technology will therefore be able to find some food for thought, but those looking for an in-depth approach to topics such as repair, life cycles, recycling, unmaking, and other aspects related to the disappearance of technology will probably be disappointed.
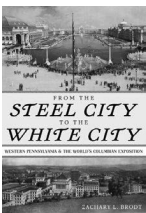
STEFAN KREBS

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**From the Steel City to the White City:
Western Pennsylvania and the World's Columbian Exposition**

By Zachary L. Brodt. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2024. Pp. 261.

Anyone who has spent time in Pittsburgh's Oakland neighborhood can marvel at the City Beautiful Movement that shaped Oakland's civic center, a direct reflection of the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. *From the Steel City to the White City*, the new book by Zachary L. Brodt, an archivist and records manager at the University of Pittsburgh, illustrates how Pittsburgh shaped the World's Fair, and in turn, how it shaped Pittsburgh. "Fairgoers were eager to travel from the Steel City to the White City to explore all they could, and then mold Pittsburgh in its image upon their return," writes Brodt (p. 7).

There are nearly one hundred books about the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893, but Brodt's is the first exclusively about Pittsburgh's contribution. Initially, it appears to be a Pittsburgh-centric story about a global event. As Brodt writes in the introduction, "the road to the country's newfound success and power came directly through Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania" (p. 5). Brodt is not wrong. The Silicon Valley of its day, late nineteenth-century Pittsburgh