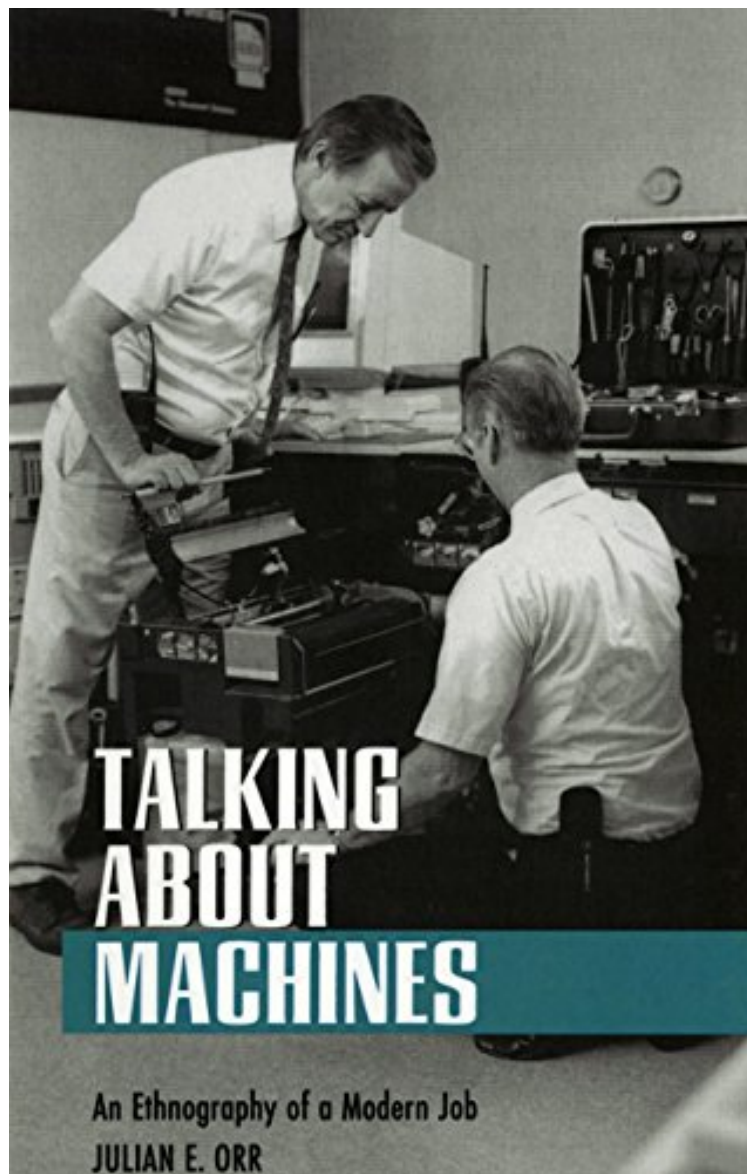


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Talking about Machines: An Ethnography of a Modern Job (Collection on technology and work)

Julian E. Orr

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Julian E. Orr : Talking about Machines: An Ethnography of a Modern Job (Collection on technology and work) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Talking about Machines: An Ethnography of a Modern Job (Collection on technology and work):

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A must read for all service managers and service providers.By

Richard G. Kahn
The book was recommended to me. I work for the company that the book deals with, in fact, I am a Technical Representative. That is the title of the job when I was hired 20 years ago. We now are called Customer Service Engineers, I still say Tech. Rep. I read the book and gave it to my manager to read, she hasn't returned it yet. The book makes some interesting points and observations about the Tech. Reps. world. How we interact with other Tech. Reps and our bosses and how we "get along" with our machines. It explained who we are and what we do, or try to do. Should be on any service managers reading list. I won't comment on the academic areas of the book, above my area of knowledge. It opened my eyes, and made me look at customers, service and copiers/printers/equipment as I had not done so in the past.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A must-read book
By Lene Pettersen
It's a classic that should be on all Universities reading list, no matter what subject you are studying. Why? Because it shows why the delicate triangle technology, work and employees always needs to be included in planning and in our analysis. It is also one contribution to the scarce amount of literature about modern work.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Describes the life and work of copier repairmen
By DesertRat
I had hoped to read more about the term "war stories" and how it originated. However, as an ethnography of the job of a copier repairman, it did an excellent job.

This is a story of how work gets done. It is also a study of how field service technicians talk about their work and how that talk is instrumental in their success. In his innovative ethnography, Julian E. Orr studies the people who repair photocopiers and shares vignettes from their daily lives. He characterizes their work as a continuous highly skilled improvisation within a triangular relationship of technician, customer, and machine. The work technicians do encompasses elements not contained in the official definition of the job yet vital to its success. Orr's analysis of the way repair people talk about their work reveals that talk is, in fact, a crucial dimension of their practice. Diagnosis happens through a narrative process, the creation of a coherent description of the troubled machine. The descriptions become the basis for technicians' discourse about their experience, and the circulation of stories among the technicians is the principal means by which they stay informed of the developing subtleties of machine behavior. Orr demonstrates that technical knowledge is a socially distributed resource stored and diffused primarily through an oral culture. Based on participant observation with copier repair technicians in the field and strengthened by Orr's own years as a technician, this book explodes numerous myths about technicians and suggests how technical work differs from other kinds of employment.

"Orr's volume proves a rewarding read, one that underlines the importance of understanding the complex interactions of machines and humans, technology and culture in the twentieth-century workplace."
?Amy Sue Bix, *Technology and Culture*
"This book should be of value to anyone interested in studies of work practice, and to those who study technical work in particular."
?Bonaly J. Nelsen, *Industrial and Labor Relations*
"How ironic, at an historic moment when technology has assumed a taken-for-granted status in the workplace, that scholarship on organizations, work, and technology has only recently begun to find its feet. With this splendid ethnography of work practices by technicians who service photocopy machines, Julian Orr has made a major incursion into this territory, producing a volume that bridges disciplinary boundaries by joining the literature of organizations, occupations, and work with that of science and technology studies."
?Diane Vaughn, *Administrative Science Quarterly*
From the Back Cover
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About the Author
Julian E. Orr is an anthropologist. He worked at Xerox PARC, has raised sheep, and is an active member of the sangha at Green Gulch Farm Zen Center.