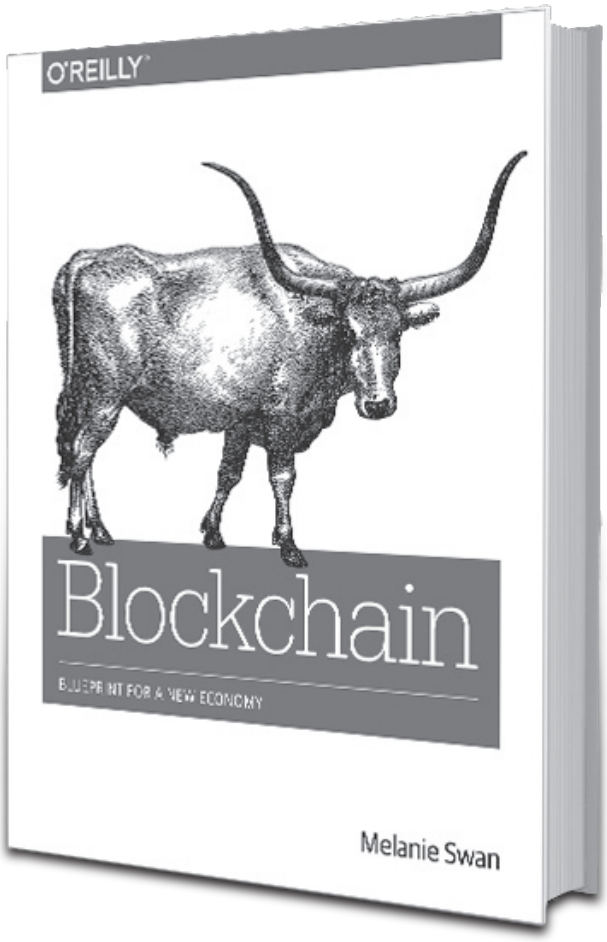
Book Review

Blockchain: Blueprint for a New Economy

by Melanie Swan



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About the Author

Melanie Swan is the founder of the Institute for Block Chain Studies, is an instructor at Singularity University and an affiliate scholar at the Institute for 'Ethics and Emerging Technologies'. She has a background and experience in financial markets, having served at Fidelity and J. P. Morgan and holds an MBA in Finance from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. This is the third book as part of a three-book series from O'Reilly publishing house.

Appreciation and Critique

Disruptive technology is the epitome of technological change. However, the impact of disruptive technologies is more pervasive on the adoption process. The result of such disruptive application of technology has now created a fringe economy that is driven by alternative currency called the bit coin; a digital currency that is issued and circulated by automated network of users. The uniqueness lies in the technology that drives this digital currency use and records its monitoring system. This system is a decentralized, algorithmic, self-policing public ledger called as a block chain.

All proponents of disruptive technology foresee that block chain as a digital exchange and the bit coin a digital currency would usher in a digitized financial economy that is unified by using a common currency and digitized payment mode that is seamless on-transaction, issuance of e-licensing and e-contract. Such an economy would create digitized assets (both institutionally and individually) with typical physical assets losing out on its valuation.

Melanie Swan's book brings to the public domain the pivotal technology that is capable of devising a new order in today's economic and financial world. The author supports the block chain technology as being the fifth most popular computer paradigm after the mainframe computer, Personal Computers (PCs), the Internet and mobile phones/social networking. The book is written in a simple narrative style with less emphasis on technical jargon, which makes it appealing to all readers and not just to the technologically savvy. The book is informative and leaves the reader yearning for more such details.

A major highlight of the book lies in its ability to show how the block chain technology is bound to touch and transform the financial world across the globe. The book does so by first introducing the concepts and features of the technology and then unraveling its impact foot prints with examples and cases. Block chain as a concept and technology is first explained followed by how the new economy has

conceived its structure its functions, and finally, the impact put forth is traced in a simple non- jargon language.

The chapters in the book are focused on the following issues related to block chain. Firstly, the concepts, features and functionality of the bit coin are discussed. This is followed by explaining how technology can be used for automated tracking of digital endeavors. The issues of how to enable censorship-resistant organization models and creation and use of a digital repository for identity verification are presented next. The major attribute of this technology in provision of cheaper and more effective services that are traditionally provided by nations are discussed. This is followed by explaining how block chain technology can be used in the areas of science (with focus on data mining), healthcare (management of personal health and genomic records), and academic publication (open access publishing).

Melanie Swan is a major proponent of block chain technology and the different benefits that it offers. She notes that this disruption of technology provides for the ability to transfer discrete quanta of anything, allowing for greater co-ordination of human activity. According to her, block chain offers the benefits of integrating different aspects of life in the areas of economics, finance and money such as both hard assets (property, vehicles) and intangibles (healthcare data, ideas, reputations and votes) in a tiered fashion, enabling any form of asset inventory and exchange in a new paradigm.

Finally, this is a book that explores the positives of a technological boom which could see block chain as a driver of a new economy. This technology could unleash a new way in which the economic world order would function. This book is recommended for both students interested in and practitioners of this emergent technology.

Uma Sharma
Assistant Professor, Marketing and General Management
Rashtreeya Vidyalaya Institute of Management (RVIM)
#CA-17, 36th Cross, 26th Main
4th "T" Block, Jayanagar
Bengaluru – 560041, India.
E-mail: umasharma.rvim@rvei.edu.in