Gift Guide: Tech books that enlighten, entertain

December 2 2009, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Your holiday shopping list probably includes gadgets, games and gizmos that illustrate how technology is changing the way we work, play and communicate. So why not throw in a few books about the people and services causing the delight and disruption? Here are a few suggestions:

"Googled" by Ken Auletta (suggested retail price: $27.95); "Inside Larry & Sergey's Brain" by Richard L. Brandt ($24.95).

Stanford University graduate students Larry Page and Sergey Brin were never coy about their outlandish ambitions when they founded Google in a [Silicon Valley](#) garage 11 years ago. They were determined to change the world, and Auletta - the longtime media columnist for The New Yorker magazine - thinks they have pulled it off.

That's why his book is subtitled his book, "The End of the World as We Know It." Unlike the band REM, Auletta isn't convinced we should feel fine about it.

The book covers a lot of turf already tread upon by previous tomes about the Internet search leader. But it also provides an up-to-date look on Google's intensifying battles with the media, privacy watchdogs and antitrust regulators worried about the company's growing power.

By comparison, "Inside Larry & Sergey's Brain," is more like a stocking stuffer, both in size and substance. It covers the main bases and is a good read, but the Google founders seemed to have shared more of their inner thoughts with Auletta. Or maybe Auletta just does a better job of dissecting them.

"The Twitter Book" ($19.99) by Tim O'Reilly and Sarah Milstein ($19.99); "Twitter Tips, Tricks and Tweets" ($19.99) by Paul McFedries and Pete Cashmore; "Twitter Wit" ($12.99) edited by Nick Douglas.

Twitter isn't quite as powerful as Google, but can be an interesting and fun communications tool. It's even better if you learn how to make the most of it.

Both "The Twitter Book" and "Twitter Tips, Tricks and Tweets" make sense of the Twitterverse's lingo and etiquette, and they point out other twitterific services and applications.

"Twitter Wit" is a whimsical collection of the best tweets so far, pithy posts that say a lot in 140 characters or less. Even if they don't inspire you, tweets like these might make you smile (or grimace): "A hangover is the wrath of grapes" and "The baggage carousel sounds a lot more fun than it actually is."

"Stealing MySpace" ($27) by Julia Angwin; "The Accidental Billionaires" ($25) by Ben Mezrich.

These are very different takes on Internet hangouts that have redefined how millions of people stay connected to their family and friends.

Although it was released in March, "Stealing MySpace" already may feel a little outdated because the site's owner, News Corp., has brought in a new management team to place a greater emphasis on entertainment. But the book remains an engaging look at how online social networks became ingrained in our culture.

"The Accidental Billionaires" made plenty of enemies at Facebook, where its tale of young lust and betrayal is derided as being more fiction than fact. And Mezrich definitely seems to have exaggerated the truth about Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his zealots. But that doesn't make the book any less zesty, especially if it's taken with a grain of salt. A movie version is already in the works, with Jesse Eisenberg (recently in "Adventureland") starring as Zuckerberg.

"Behind The Cloud" ($27.95) by Marc Benioff and Carlye Adler.

Contrary to popular perception, Salesforce.com founder Marc Benioff didn't invent "cloud computing" - a catchall for software programs that are made available over Internet connections instead of being installed on individual computers. But there's no question about this showman's role as the chief evangelist for the idea, which generates more than $1 billion in annual revenue at Salesforce.com. Few believed Benioff could pull it off when he started Salesforce.com a decade ago. Find out why people listen to him now.

"Smasher" ($14.95) by Keith Raffel.

This novel is a thriller with a Silicon Valley twist. The bad guys are a ruthless high-tech CEO (obviously based on Oracle's Larry Ellison with a

touch of Apple's Steve Jobs) and a back-stabbing physicist whose conniving landed him a Nobel Prize. The hero is Ian Michaels, who spends most of the novel trying to preserve his startup's independence, restore his great aunt's legacy and find out who tried to kill his wife, a prosecutor.

It helps that the author knows about intrigue, having once held top-secret clearance to keep an eye on the CIA for a Senate committee. He also knows his way around Silicon Valley: He ran a smaller rival to Salesforce.com before selling it six years ago for at least $56 million.

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