CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix Introduction 1

Understanding media 1
Software, or the engine of contemporary societies 6
What is software studies? 10
Cultural software 20
Media applications 24
From documents to performances 33
Why the history of cultural software does not exist 39

PART 1 Inventing media software 53

Summary of the book's narrative 43

1 Alan Kay's universal media machine 55

Appearance versus function 55
"Simulation is the central notion of the Dynabook" 64
The permanent extendibility 91
The computer as a metamedium 101

2 Understanding metamedia 107

The building blocks 107
Media-independent vs. media-specific techniques 113
Inside Photoshop 124
There is only software 147

PART 2 Hybridization and evolution 159

3 Hybridization 161

Hybridity *vs.* multimedia 161 The evolution of a computer metamedium 176 Hybridity: examples 184 Strategies of hybridization 195

4 Soft evolution 199

Algorithms and data structures 199
What is a "medium"? 204
The metamedium or the monomedium? 225
The evolution of media species 233

PART 3 Software in action 241

5 Media design 243

After Effects and the invisible revolution 243
The aesthetics of hybridity 254
Deep remixability 267
Layers, transparency, compositing 277
After Effects interface: from "time-based" to "composition-based" 282
3D space as a media design platform 289
Import/export: design workflow 296
Variable form 307
Amplification 323

Conclusion 329

Software, hardware, and social media 329 Media after software 335 Software epistemology 337