Finn Brunton

Finn Brunton is an American scholar, writer, and professor whose work focuses on digital culture, privacy, obsolete technologies, and the hidden infrastructures of the internet. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, and has taught at institutions such as New York University and the University of California, Davis. Currently, he is an Associate Professor of Science and Technology Studies (STS) at the University of California, Davis, where he continues to research and write about the intersections of media history, cryptography, and digital resistance.

Brunton's work is deeply interdisciplinary, blending media theory, history, and critical technology studies. He is particularly interested in how people adapt, misuse, or subvert digital tools—whether through spam, cryptocurrency, or obfuscation tactics. His writing is both scholarly and accessible, making complex technological histories engaging for a broad audience.

Major Books

Spam: A Shadow History of the Internet (2013, with Helen Nissenbaum)

- Explores spam as a phenomenon that shaped internet governance, economics, and resistance.
- Traces how unwanted messages influenced digital security and user behavior.

Digital Cash: The Unknown History of the Anarchists, Utopians, and Technologists Who Created Cryptocurrency (2019)

- A prehistory of Bitcoin, revealing forgotten experiments in digital money.
- Examines cypherpunk movements, failed e-currencies, and the ideological roots of crypto.

Recent Publications & Articles

Brunton remains active in both academic and public-facing writing. Some recent works include:

- "The Miner's Lunch: Bitcoin and the Environmental Imagination" (2021) – Critiques the ecological impact of cryptocurrency mining.
- "Infrastructural Amnesia" (2023) – Discusses how digital systems erase their own histories.

He has also contributed to The Guardian, The Atlantic, Wired, and Logic Magazine, often writing about surveillance, obsolete tech, and the politics of digital infrastructure.