



# The Uses of the University

*Clark Kerr*

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## The Uses of the University Clark Kerr

America's university president extraordinaire adds a new chapter and preface to "The Uses of the University," probably the most important book on the modern university ever written. This summa on higher education brings the research university into the new century.

The multiversity that Clark Kerr so presciently discovered now finds itself in an age of apprehension with few certainties. Leaders of institutions of higher learning can be either hedgehogs or foxes in the new age. Kerr gives five general points of advice on what kinds of attitudes universities should adopt. He then gives a blueprint for action for foxes, suggesting that a few hedgehogs need to be around to protect university autonomy and the public weal.

## The Uses of the University Details

Date : Published March 2nd 2001 by Harvard University Press (first published January 1982)

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Author : Clark Kerr

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## From Reader Review The Uses of the University for online ebook

### Marvin says

As I read more about Higher Education, this book continually popped up as a "must read." Now, I understand why. The book is actually adapted from three lectures Kerr made. It is more philosophical than polemical. Kerr explains the evolution of the American university (up until the 1960s), specifically where it either copied from or diverged from the English and German models. What I learned and now appreciate much more is the importance of federal government intervention in Higher Education via research money in the 1940s. Prior, I was most familiar with the Morrill Act and the GI Bill as federal government initiatives that led to large scale growth in the American Academy. I read the original version and now need to find the latest edition with a chapter written nearly 30 years later concerning advancements in Higher Ed in the interregnum.

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### Steve says

An interesting view of how the landscape of higher education is changing in America since the 1950s. Clark Kerr was the president at UC Berkeley. The original version of the book was written in the 1960s.

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### Graeme Roberts says

I expected this book to be dry. It was actually very exciting, and hard to put down. Kerr's deep thinking about the state, history, and future of the research university in the United States, starting with the 1963 Godkin Lectures at Harvard, which now seem astonishingly prescient, and updated each decade until 2001 helps us to understand the vast and increasing complexities of the *Cities of Intellect*, as he calls them, and the challenges of trying to lead them. Herding cats would be an entirely insufficient analogy.

"The university president in the United States is expected to be a friend of the students, a colleague of the faculty, a good fellow with the alumni, a sound administrator with the trustees, a good speaker with the public, an astute bargainer with the foundations and the federal agencies, a politician with the state legislature, a friend of industry, labor, and agriculture, a persuasive diplomat with the donors, a champion of education generally, a supporter of the professions (particularly law and medicine), a spokesman to the press, a scholar in his own right, a public servant at the state and national levels, a devotee of opera and football equally, a decent human being, a good husband and father, an active member of a church. Above all he must enjoy traveling in airplanes, eating his meals in public, and attending public ceremonies. No one can be all of these things. Some succeed at being none."

— The Uses of the University, 1995

Christopher Jencks of Northwestern University summed it up beautifully in his cover blurb:

Still the finest introduction available to one of America's most remarkable and least understood inventions: the research university. Probably the most learned, witty, and indiscreet book ever written by a university president, yet still wise in a way that stands the test of time.

I loved the gentle wisdom, fairness, and honesty of this Pennsylvania farm boy who achieved real greatness, but remained humble.

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## E. C. Koch says

If Nostradamus was a university president then he would have written *The Uses of the University*. This book is one part analysis of the American university system/culture (the reason you bought it), two parts predictions for the future, and two parts self defense (coming in the form of additional postscripts written to accommodate new editions). Besides being written with the same crackling prose you'd expect from an economist, Kerr spends too much time discussing the evolving role of the university president, too much time prognosticating about the potential uses of computing machines, and nowhere near enough time evaluating the economic realities of the studentry and the professoriate of the 21st century (and this from an economist!). Too, he uses the word "adjunct" exactly one time (on page 202, and this only in the sense of "in addition to" generally) while the exploding adjunct population is a crisis I see having a much greater impact on the university of tomorrow than whether the president can be a successful mediator. So, then, I guess my major complaint here is that this book, as I see it, is dated and concentrates too hard on the wrong things. As a former adjunct and current grad. student I have my share of opinions w/r/t the uses of the university as an institution capable of empowering its community of teachers and students to transcend the course of common life, an institution that has become subject to deterioration due, in part, to the requisite expansion of unlimited democracy (I'm looking at you, Ranciere). The university is a place of tension and struggle and difficulty all in an effort to achieve an ever-ephemeral truth, and this quest - the entire purpose of higher education - is being challenged by greater demand for job training and (gag) practicality. To read Kerr one would think that the only issue today is how to keep everyone happy, which avoids a conversation about the reasons why an expectation for happiness is misguided. Kerr, to his credit, argues that anyone claiming that these are end-times for the university (and in this way he's not like Nostradamus) is myopic, just as it has been in every other generation since the trivium and quadrivium curricula were established. Ultimately, though, this is more useful as an historical document of the recent past than it is as an analysis of our contemporary moment.

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## Nguyen Thinh says

Đây là 1?n ??u tiên ???c ??c m?t cu?n non-fic xã h?i v?i khá nhi?u t? chuyên môn và 1?p lu?n d?n ch?ng. Sách s? h?i khó ??c, ?ôi lúc ?ôi h?i ng??i ??c ph?i có nh?ng ki?n th?c n?n t?ng v? các ???ng 1?i c?a các n?n ??i h?c trên th? gi?i, kinh t?, chính tr? c?ng nh? 1?ch s? M?. N?i dung sách ???c chia làm 9 ph?n, 3 ph?n ??u là bài thuy?t gi?ng c?a Clark Kerr ? Harvard, và 6 ph?n sau là nh?ng ph?n ???c tác gi? c?p nh?t liên t?c theo t?ng n?m ??n tr??c khi ông m?t, nên ng??i ??c s? có cái nhìn tr?i r?ng v? quá trình phát tri?n c?a ??i h?c M? t? lúc khai sinh ??n lúc c?c th?nh, ??ng th?i kèm theo nh?ng d? ?oán, hi v?ng và phân tích t?ng quan gi?a chính tr? v?i giáo d?c. T?ng là ch? t?ch c?a h? th?ng University of California, Clark Kerr có nh?ng hi?u bi?t r?t sâu s?c v? giáo d?c ??i h?c M?. Ông gi?i thích ng??i ??c nh?ng n?n t?ng tri?t h?c xây d?ng lên mô hình ??i h?c M?, nh?ng y?u t? giúp M? tr? thành c??ng qu?c trong giáo d?c hi?n nay, và nh?ng khó kh?n và cám d? ??i h?c M? s? g?p ph?i v? mâu thu?n n?i b?, v?n ?? v? s? t? tr? c?a ??i h?c, và vi?c phân ph?i th?i gian gi?a gi?ng d?y và nghiên c?u. Cu?n sách cho ta th?y ??i h?c M? th?t s? là m?t ??nh ch? giáo d?c, v?i nhi?u m?ng 1??i ?an xen ph?c t?p, và là m?t ?ô Th? Tri Th?c.

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## Joseph Serwach says

Book includes Kerr's 1963 lectures on universities and includes subsequent chapters written in 1972, 1994 and 2001. Many of his predictions were dead-on and much of what he describes is as true today as it was then. A great read with a great look at the big picture of higher education

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## David says

The fifth edition of *Uses of the University* has nine chapters: three from the 1963 edition and six written in the years since. In the first three chapters, Kerr describes the evolution of the 'multiversity,' a confederation of research institutions, professional schools, and undergraduate institutions. He writes of other academic models, both historical and model, from Europe and South America; and after describing the current university model and its antecedents, he gave some predictions for the future. The tone is neutral, with moments of guarded pessimism or guarded optimism.

Then the 1960 student revolts took place. Student activists at Berkeley decided Kerr's writings must be the work of a "proto-fascist ideologue," though Kerr wrote even in the original introduction that he did not universally approve of the situation he described. In the fourth chapter, Kerr reflects on the student revolts and the reaction to the book. In chapters 5-8, Kerr writes about the academic world of the 80s and early 90s in the period he calls the "Great Academic Depression. It's not happy reading. The last chapter is a prediction of what lies ahead, and though there's some optimism there, it's muted. The last sentence nicely summarizes the chapter's feel: "To the hedgehogs of the 1960s of which I was one: rest in peace; to the foxes of the twenty-first century: great expectations for success in your attempted escapes from the maze."

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