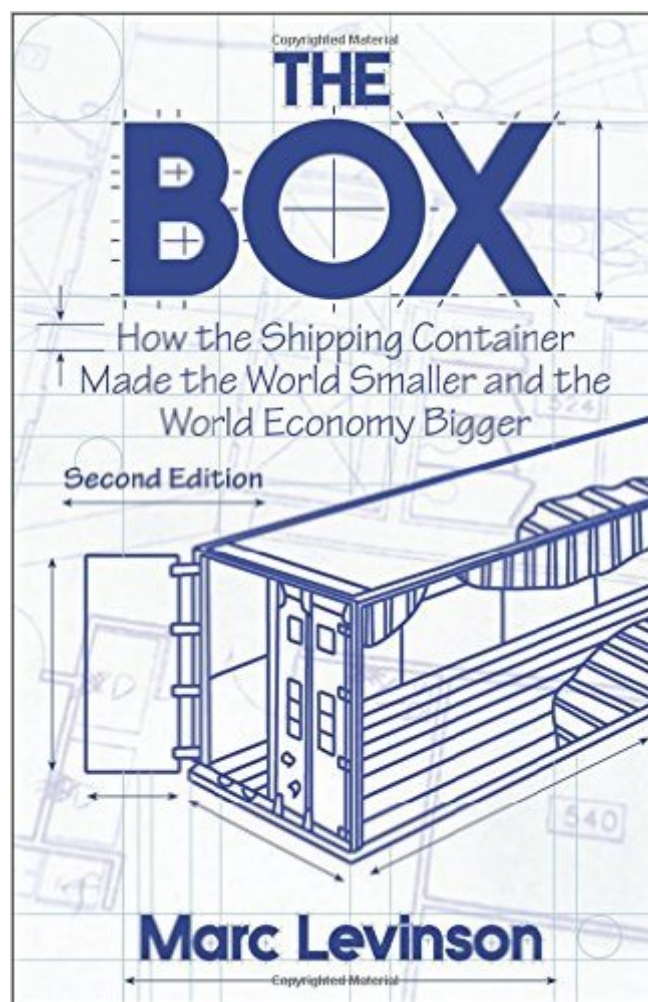


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The Box: How The Shipping Container Made The World Smaller And The World Economy Bigger, Second Edition With A New Chapter By The Author





Synopsis

In April 1956, a refitted oil tanker carried fifty-eight shipping containers from Newark to Houston. From that modest beginning, container shipping developed into a huge industry that made the boom in global trade possible. *The Box* tells the dramatic story of the container's creation, the decade of struggle before it was widely adopted, and the sweeping economic consequences of the sharp fall in transportation costs that containerization brought about. But the container didn't just happen. Its adoption required huge sums of money, both from private investors and from ports that aspired to be on the leading edge of a new technology. It required years of high-stakes bargaining with two of the titans of organized labor, Harry Bridges and Teddy Gleason, as well as delicate negotiations on standards that made it possible for almost any container to travel on any truck or train or ship. Ultimately, it took McLean's success in supplying U.S. forces in Vietnam to persuade the world of the container's potential. Drawing on previously neglected sources, economist Marc Levinson shows how the container transformed economic geography, devastating traditional ports such as New York and London and fueling the growth of previously obscure ones, such as Oakland. By making shipping so cheap that industry could locate factories far from its customers, the container paved the way for Asia to become the world's workshop and brought consumers a previously unimaginable variety of low-cost products from around the globe. Published in hardcover on the fiftieth anniversary of the first container voyage, this is the first comprehensive history of the shipping container. Now with a new chapter, *The Box* tells the dramatic story of how the drive and imagination of an iconoclastic entrepreneur turned containerization from an impractical idea into a phenomenon that transformed economic geography, slashed transportation costs, and made the boom in global trade possible.

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Customer Reviews

Winner of the 2007 Anderson Medal, Society for Nautical Research
Winner of the 2007 Bronze Medal in Finance/Investment/Economics, Independent Publisher Book Awards
Shortlisted for the 2006 Financial Times/Goldman Sachs Business Book of the Year
Honorable Mention for the 2006 John Lyman Book Award, Science and Technology category, North American Society for Ocean History
One of Financial Times (FT.com) Best Business Books of 2013 (chosen by guest critic Bill Gates, Chairman of Microsoft)"One of the most significant, yet least noticed, economic developments of the last few decades [was] the transformation of international shipping. . . . The idea of containerization was simple: to move trailer-size loads of goods seamlessly among trucks, trains and ships, without breaking bulk. . . . Along the way, even the most foresighted people made mistakes and lost millions. . . . [A] classic tale of trial and error, and of creative destruction."--Virginia Postrel, The New York Times [See full review <http://bit.do/Box-NYT-Postrel>]"Marc Levinson's concern is business history on a grand scale. He tells a moral tale. There are villains ... and there is one larger than life hero: Malcom McLean. . . . Levinson has produced a fascinating exposition of the romance of the steel container. I'll never look at a truck in the same way again."--Howard Davies, The Times (UK)"Like much of today's international cargo, Marc Levinson's The Box arrives 'just in time.' . . . It is a tribute to the box itself that far-off places matter so much to us now: It has eased trade, sped up delivery, lowered prices and widened the offering of goods everywhere. Not bad for something so simple and self-contained."--Tim W. Ferguson, The Wall Street Journal"[A] smart, engaging book. . . . Mr. Levinson makes a persuasive case that the container has been woefully underappreciated. . . . [T]he story he tells is that of a classic disruptive technology: the world worked in one fashion before the container came onto the scene, and in a completely different fashion after it took hold."--Joe Nocera, The New York Times [See full review <http://bit.do/Box-NYT-Nocera>]"By artfully weaving together the nuts and bolts of what happened at which port with the grand sweep of economic history, Levinson has produced a marvelous read for anyone who cares about how the interconnected world economy came to be."--Neil Irwin, Washington Post"Mr Levinson. . . . makes a strong case that it was McLean's thinking that led to modern-day containerisation. It altered the economics of shipping and with that the flow of world

trade. Without the container, there would be no globalization."--The Economist [See full review <http://bit.do/Box-Economist>]"A fascinating new book. . . . [I]t shows vividly how resistance to technological change caused shipping movements to migrate away from the Hudson river to other East Coast ports."--Management Today [See full review <http://bit.do/Box-MT>]"Marc Levinson's The Box . . . illustrates clearly how great risks are taken by entrepreneurs when entrenched interests and government regulators conspire against them. Even after these opponents are dispatched, technological and economic uncertainty plague the entrepreneur just as much as the vaunted 'first-mover advantage' blesses him, perhaps more. The story of the shipping container is the story of the opponents of innovation."--Chris Berg, Institute of Public Affairs Review"International trade . . . owes its exponential growth to something utterly ordinary and overlooked, says author Marc Levinson: the metal shipping container.... The Box makes a strong argument. . . . Levinson . . . spins yarns of the men who fought to retain the old On the Waterfront ways and of those who made the box ubiquitous."--Michael Arndt, BusinessWeek [See full review <http://bit.do/Box-BW-Arndt>]"[An] enlightening new history. . . . [The shipping container] was the real-world equivalent of the Internet revolution."--Justin Fox, Fortune [See full review <http://bit.do/Box-Fortune-Fox>]"Marc Levinson's The Box is . . . broad-ranging and . . . readable. It describes not just the amazing course of the container-ship phenomenon but the turmoil of human affairs in its wake."--Bob Simmons, The Seattle Times [See full review <http://bit.do/Box-ST-Simmons>]"Author and economist Marc Levinson recounts the little-known story of how the humble shipping container has revolutionized world commerce. He tells his tale using just the right blend of hard economic data and human interest. . . . Mr. Levinson's elegant weave of transportation economics, innovation, and geography is economic history at its accessible best."--David K. Hurst, Strategy + Business [See full review <http://bit.do/TheBox-Strategy-Hurst>]"The Box is . . . an engrossing read. . . . The book is well-written, with detailed notes and an index. I found it absorbing and informative from the first page."--Graham Williams, Sydney Morning Herald"This well-researched and highly readable book about the ubiquitous containers that carry so much of the world's freight will no doubt surprise most readers with its description of the immensity of the impact this simple rectangular steel box has had on global and regional economics, employment, labor relations, and the environment. . . . The Box makes for an excellent primer on innovation, risk taking, and strategic thinking. It's also a thoroughly good read."--Craig B. Grossgart, Taiwan Business Topics"The ubiquitous shipping container . . . as Mark Levinson's multilayered study shows . . . has transformed the global economy."--The Australian"Here's another item we see every day that had a revolutionary effect. The shipping container didn't just rearrange the shipping industry, or make winners of some ports (Seattle and

Tacoma among them). It changed the dynamics and economics of where goods are made and shipped to."--Bill Virgin, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*"Excellent."--J Bradford DeLong, *The Edge Financial Daily*"An engrossing read. . . . The book is well written, with detailed notes and an index. I found it absorbing and informative from the first page."--*Sydney Morning Herald*"A fascinating history of the shipping container."--Richard N. Cooper, *Foreign Affairs* [See full review <http://bit.do/TheBox-FE-Cooper>]"For sheer originality . . . [this book] by Marc Levinson, is hard to beat. The Box explains how the modern era of globalization was made possible, not by politicians agreeing to cut trade tariffs and quotas, but by the humble shipping container."--David Smith, *The Sunday Times (London)*"Ingenious analysis of the phenomenon of containerism."--Stefan Stern, *Financial Times* [See full review <http://bit.do/TheBox-FT-Stern>]"This is a smoothly written history of the ocean shipping container. . . . Marc Levinson turns it into a fascinating economic history of the last 50 years that helps us to understand globalization and industrial growth in North America."--Harvey Schachter, *Globe and Mail*"This is an ingenious analysis of containerization--a process that, Levinson argues, in fact made globalization possible."--*Business Voice*"Using a blend of hard economic data and financial projections, combined with human interest, Levinson manages to provide insights into a revolution that changed transport forever and transformed world trade."--Leon Gettler, *The Age* [See full review <http://bit.do/TheBox-Age-Gettler>]"There is much to like about Marc Levinson's recent book, *The Box*. . . . Levinson uses rich detail, a combination of archival and anecdotal data to build his story, and is constantly moving across levels of observation. . . . And the story of the box is a very good read."--*Administrative Science Quarterly*"A lively and entertaining history of the shipping container. . . . The Box does a fine job of demonstrating how exciting the container industry is, and how much economists stand to lose by ignoring it."--William Sjostrom, *EH.Net* [See full review <http://bit.do/TheBox-EH-Sjostrom>]"The Box is highly recommended for anyone with an interest in understanding the emergence of our contemporary 'globalized' world economy."--Pierre Desrochers, *Independent Review* [See full review <http://bit.do/TheBox-IndReview-Desrochers>]"[T]he insights the book provides make it a worthwhile read for anyone interested in how international trade in goods has evolved over the last 50 years."--Meredith A. Crowley, *World Trade Review*"The Box reveals the subject to be interesting and powerful, shedding light on all kinds of issues, from the role of trade unions to the Vietnam War."--NUMAST *Telegraph*"A perfect illustration of how an idiosyncratic entrepreneur brings something new into the world, and a wonderful example of how business history can be made to sing."--David Warsh, *Economic Principals Blog*

"The continuous decline of ocean shipping costs in the last 40 years is rarely credited for the growth of global trade in contemporary literature. Don't miss this amazing history."--George Stalk, Boston Consulting Group and author of *Surviving the China Riptide*"An excellent piece of work."--Bruce Nelson, Dartmouth College"This book is dynamite. The experts who tell you the transistor and microchips changed the world are off base. The ugly, unglamorous, little-noticed shipping container has changed the world. Without it, there would be no globalization, no Wal-Mart, maybe even no high-tech. And what looks like low-tech is in fact a breathtaking technological innovation. Marc Levinson's sparkling and authoritative story is great fun to read, but it is spectacular economic history as well."--Peter L. Bernstein, author of *Against the Gods: The Remarkable Story of Risk*"Fascinating, informative, wonderfully historicized. This is a terrific untold story."--Nelson Lichtenstein, University of California, Santa Barbara, and editor of *Wal-Mart: the Face of Twenty-First Century Capitalism*"The adoption of the modern shipping container may be a close second to the Internet in the way it has changed our lives. It has made products from every corner of the world commonplace and accessible everywhere. It has dramatically cut the cost of transportation and thereby made outsourcing a significant issue. It has transformed the world's port cities, and more. This book, very nicely written, makes a fascinating set of true stories of an apparently mundane subject, and dramatically illustrates how simple innovations can transform our lives."--William Baumol, Director, Berkley Center for Entrepreneurial Studies, author of *The Free-Market Innovation Machine*"In the second half of the twentieth century, an innovation came along that would transform the way the world did business. . . . I'm not talking about software. I'm talking about the shipping industry, and in particular an innovation you might not have thought much about: the shipping container. It is the subject of an excellent book I read this summer called *The Box*. . . . The story of this transition is fascinating and reason enough to read the book. But in subtle ways *The Box* also challenges commonly held views about business and the role of innovation."--Bill Gates, *Gatesnotes*

OUTSTANDING! This book discusses everything about the origin, development, and consequences of the shipping container box. It discusses it's early attempts in the 1920s through the 1950s, it's revolutionary development by Malcom McLane in the 1950s and 1960s, and the world - wide economic and social consequences. It gives a thorough presentation of how some long - established ports such as the London east end, the New York Manhattan and Brooklyn docks, and the port of Liverpool died while ports that were insignificant in 1960 such as Singapore, Shanghai, and Busan evolved into today's mega ports. Not surprisingly, the ports that died did so as a

combination of geography, incredible union recalcitrance and stupidity, poor government decisions, and business short-sightedness. There is also extensive discussion and analysis of the international economic consequences of the vastly lowered international shipping costs. One interesting point that the author makes that I found most interesting: it wasn't US (or any country's) import tariffs that really protected national industries and manufacturers from foreign competition from countries such as Japan, China, and South Korea. It was the relatively high cost of ocean shipping that protected them. Once international shipping costs fell drastically, US industry was almost immediately subjected to competition that it had never encountered before.

I enjoy "how stuff works" books and this one delivered! Container shipping is a business-to-business technology. Few consumers have ever directly sent or received a TEU container. Thus, one of the transformative technologies of the 20th century has gotten relatively little public attention. The technology itself is straightforward: put a lot of cargo in a large box (20 feet or 40 feet long), seal the box, move the box over the world transportation network (ships, railroads, and trucks), and then un-pack the box at the far end. Among other things, this system cuts down on shrinkage from theft. The business side is more complicated. Somebody had to design ships that could carry boxes more efficiently. Somebody had to persuade ports to install new container-handling systems. Somebody had to tell a lot of dock workers that their services were no longer needed. In the end, most of the lower costs flowed through to shippers rather than the companies offering shipping services. That's a good thing. Levinson's book covers this revolution from several angles. On the down-side, there is no central heart to the book; the closest he comes is following the career of Malcom McLean, although even that narrative thread is interrupted often. On the up-side, the book is meticulously sourced, with many references to original documents from ports in New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area.

I found 'The Box' was absolutely fascinating. The story of the shipping container may have been largely ignored, but it explains so much about the onset of globalisation in late 20th century. Until the mid 1960s, ocean freight was transported in breakbulk ships; the cargo manually jammed into the ships' holds by teams of longshoremen. The process was laborious and time consuming. Major port cities like New York and London were structured around their docks, with factories near their ports to minimise the costs involved with the multiple handling and warehousing involved in transporting goods. Then, a few pioneers started trying to move freight in containers. Within a few short decades, containers revolutionised world trade. Containers of goods could be seamlessly moved from a

factory, between trucks, trains, and ships to customers. Where once it may have taken months to ship a product from the US to Europe, it can now take less than a week. Global trade skyrocketed! Nobody predicted the enormous impact that containers were to have on the global economy. Once, firms concentrated their factories in one location to minimise transport costs. With the advent of fast, cheap and reliable container shipping, component manufacture was farmed out around the world to the cheapest supplier. The structures of port cities changed drastically, with whole longshore communities being destroyed, and factories moving to where land was cheap. Of course, countries in Asia soon became major manufacturing powers.

What a great story! It's hard to appreciate how this boring, ubiquitous thing - the shipping container rapidly crept into every facet of our lives. These things are relatively new but they're everywhere. Levinson's book shows you how the container was developed, how it spread, and what it's used for. You'll learn about the early pioneers and the companies they spawned, some of which are still around. Just as fascinating, Levinson describes the world before "the box" - you'll be surprised how different transportation was in the recent past. There's no moralizing here, he just presents the facts in an objective way and lets you see the world as it is. Levinson comes across as genuinely interested in the subject and it rubs off on the reader. This is a book I've lent to friends as "you've got to read this". Everyone enjoys it. If you are a fan of human ingenuity or the history of engineering, international commerce, shipping, etc, you'll enjoy this book too.

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