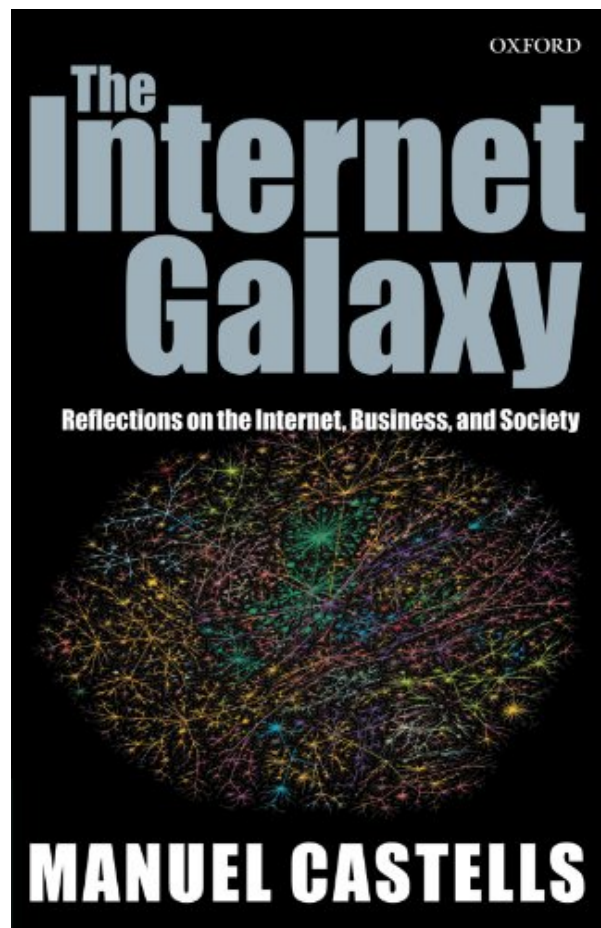
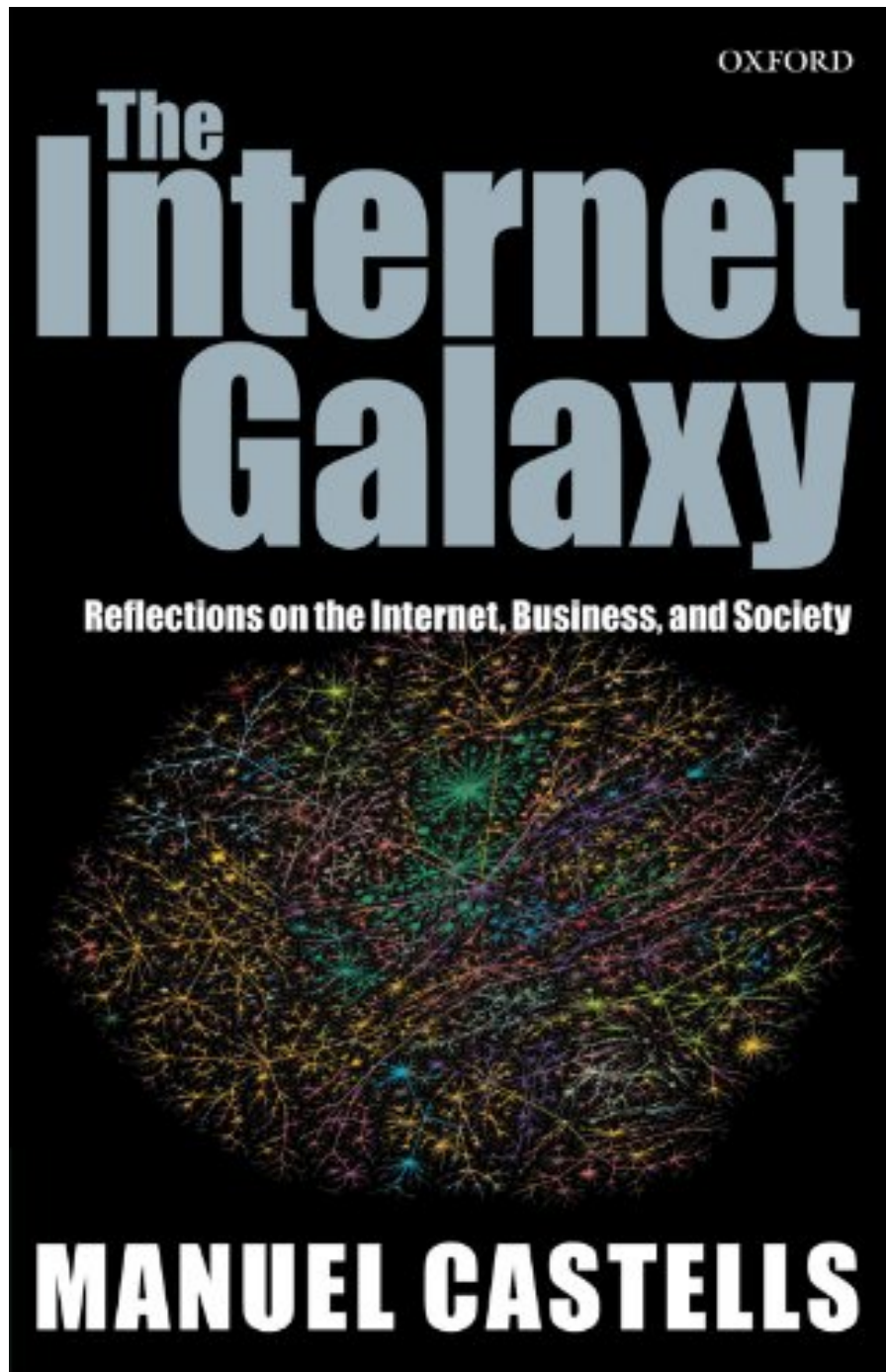


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Manuel Castells is one of the world's leading thinkers on the new information age, hailed by *The Economist* as "the first significant philosopher of cyberspace," and by *Christian Science Monitor* as "a pioneer who has hacked out a logical, well-documented, and coherent picture of early 21st century civilization, even as it rockets forward largely in a blur." Now, in *The Internet Galaxy*, this brilliantly insightful writer speculates on how the Internet will change our lives.

Castells believes that we are "entering, full speed, the Internet Galaxy, in the midst of informed bewilderment." His aim in this exciting and profound work is to help us to understand how the Internet came into being, and how it is affecting every area of human life--from work, politics, planning and development, media, and privacy, to our social interaction and life in the home. We are at ground zero of the new network society. In this book, its major commentator reveals the Internet's huge capacity to liberate, but also its ability to marginalize and exclude those who do not have access to it. Castells provides no glib solutions, but asks us all to take responsibility for the future of this new information age.

The Internet is becoming the essential communication and information medium in our society, and stands alongside electricity and the printing press as one of the greatest innovations of all time. *The Internet Galaxy* offers an illuminating look at how this new technology will influence business, the economy, and our daily lives.

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A brilliant analysis

By Bill Godfrey

It is part of the conventional wisdom that the Internet affects all of our lives, is a key element in development of the 'new economy', and is becoming a major factor in political development. At the same time, how the Internet interacts with other influences and what social and technological trends are going on under the surface is not well understood. It is, however, so central to the development of our economy and society that it is essential to understand it.

Manuel Castells has produced a brilliant analysis of these issues. The book is written for both an academic and a general readership and meets the needs of both excellently, although some parts of it are reasonably hard work for the generalist. The reward, at least for this reader, is a far clearer understanding of the dynamics of development of our networked society and the issues that need to be confronted. It is essential reading for anyone concerned with economic or political development at any level from local community to global issues.

In style the book belongs to what I think of as the European tradition of clear and careful analysis and exposition, rather than the common American approach to business books of heavy reliance on drawing conclusions from examples derived from 'great name' companies. The result is a book that requires serious concentration in order to follow the complex, sometimes contradictory and paradoxical influences that the author elucidates for us.

It is directed primarily to the reader as citizen, rather than specifically aiming to help business people toward profitable application of Internet technology. In consequence, as well as providing a valuable overview of the dynamics of development of our national and global economy and society, it contains useful reflections on ethics and governance at the business level and also on the potential benefits and risks to the development of civil society nationally and internationally.

The author's starting point is that (the dot points following are slightly modified quotations excerpted from the 'Opening' to the book):

* The technology of the Internet provides the means of bringing together reliance on networks, dominant in private interaction, with the capacity for coordination of tasks and management of complexity, for which organizations have historically relied on hierarchical command and control.

* The logic, language and constraints of the Internet are not well understood beyond technological matters. Popular understanding is driven by myth, ideology and gossip more than by a realistic assessment of the issues.

* People, institutions, companies and society at large, transform technology by modifying and experimenting with it. The Internet transforms the way we communicate and do things and, by doing many things with the Internet, we transform the Internet itself.

* It follows that the Internet is a particularly malleable technology, susceptible of being deeply modified by its social practice, and leading to a whole range of potential social outcomes - to be discovered by experience, not proclaimed beforehand. Neither utopia nor dystopia, the Internet is the expression of ourselves - through a specific code of communication, which we must understand if we want to change our reality.

The first two chapters offer lessons from the history of the Internet and a description of the culture that gave rise to, and sustains it. Chapters 3 through 6 discuss e-business, the new economy, the concepts of virtual communities and networked society and key political issues of civil society, privacy and liberty. Chapter 7 is concerned with multimedia, while Chapters 8 and 9 are concerned with the geography of the Internet and the digital divide. There is an 8 page conclusion on the challenges of the network society, in which the mask of the analyst slips somewhat to reveal the passionate advocate of what Soros in *The Crisis of Global Capitalism* called the open society and to echo Laszlo's call in *Macrosift* for a 'fundamental revolution of

consciousness'. Castells argues:

"Until we rebuild, both from the bottom up and from the top down, our institutions of governance and democracy, we will not be able to stand up to the fundamental challenges we are facing. And if democratic, political institutions cannot do it, no one else will or can."

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

A compelling analysis of the network society

By A Customer

(This review has been submitted on behalf of Erkki Liikanen, European Commissioner for Enterprise and Information Society)

Manuel Castells new book presents a compelling analysis of the influence of the Internet, considering topics as diverse as individual communication and freedoms, the new dynamics of social movements, business networks in the new economy, and geographic development patterns such as metropolization and digital divide.

The attraction of this book is in several aspects.

Firstly, it references up-to-date research data, making the arguments presented highly credible. For example, he gives a well considered assessment of the role of the Internet for social communication and community-building.

Secondly, Castells addresses the network society from a rich set of perspectives, taking into account both social and economic theory.

Thirdly, he presents a balanced view with respect to the impact of the Internet, observing at times profound and even transformational changes such as in business networks, while being more reserved about its influence in other cases, for example on politics.

The book is rich in well-founded observations and reasoning, while at the same time staying away from speculation or hype. Even if some may contest Castells' interpretations at times, they are always food for thought. They invite to apply the thinking on related phenomena of the network society such as the development of the wireless society or the impact of broadband.

For anyone interested in the policy in the network society I can highly recommend this book.

Erkki Liikanen

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

A good introductory literature

By Suckwoo Lee

Manuel Castells is, with no doubt, the leading figure in the sociology of information. That field has been the fastest rising area in the sociology. It deals with the interaction between IT, the economy, and society.

Manuel Castells secured his position with the book, *The Information City* (1989). This book grounded the theoretical framework. His three volumes of *Information Age* have been widely used as the textbook in the class. Those volumes have the rich depth and are well written, conclusive on each issue. But that trilogy is voluminous: about 1500 pages in total. If you prefer short but graphic, succinct introduction to the sociology of information, this is your pick. This book is based on the author's lecture held at Oxford Business School. So it's not conceived to be the systematic work but intended to orient the reader toward the basics of the field. He uses various live cases to illustrate the interaction between Internet, the economy, and society. The areas covered range from culture, new economy, virtual community, social movement, privacy, multimedia, and digital divide. Those are almost all topics tackled in the field. But this is not intended to set up serious theoretical basis in the field. If you are interested in such an attempt, I recommend James Slevin's *The Internet and Society*. But, as I mentioned in the review on that book, it requires the reader some basic understanding Giddens and other social theories, to get the nub of the book.

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