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Information Feudalism: Who Owns the Knowledge Economy?

Peter Drahos

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informationfeudalism
WHO OWNS THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY?

PETER DRAHOS WITH JOHN BRAITHWAITE

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Peter Drahos : Information Feudalism: Who Owns the Knowledge Economy? before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Information Feudalism: Who Owns the Knowledge Economy?:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The book points out the dangers and abusiveness of some intellectual property laws. By WilliamThe book clearly shows how some intellectual property laws such as patents and copyrights can be abused and taken advantage of by some people. The book shows that the great dangers of some intellectual property laws are that competition suffers as a result. There are connections between information

feudalism and medieval feudalism. The holder of the intellectual property may be in a position of central command in the market. Competition suffers as a result. Copyright, for example, is becoming an anti-innovation regime used to suppress the threat of changes that innovation brings. The bulk of intellectual property rights are not owned by their initial creators, but by corporations. Whenever an important commercial asset such as Mickey Mouse threatens to fall into the public domain because copyright protection is about to expire, ferocious lobbying often takes place to extend the term of the copyright protecting the asset. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. a lot of information clearly laid out

By Customer I was amazed that I had not heard of this book until I picked it up at an academic bookstore. The thesis of this book is (in part) that large corporations and media conglomerates have acquired a near monopoly on patents and copyrights that allows them to exploit the consumer and, more horribly, second- and third-world nations that desperately need drugs that US companies can provide for diseases like AIDS. The book gives an excellent background of the history of these corporate structures and carefully defines its terms. It may be a bit dense and, at times, one wonders when they are going to get to their main point, but I, who was unfamiliar with the history of the "corporation," found the introductory material very enlightening. As with all such problem-solution works, the problem is stated much more clearly than the solution, but I was impressed that the "solution" section wasn't "what you the individual can do to fight big business" but a call to larger organizations and governmental officials to reverse the trend toward patent and copyright monopoly. I was, at times, skeptical of the authors' historical analogies and illusions, but perhaps that is because I study literature for a living and am always "deconstructing" such things. 11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. An important eye opener and a "must read"

By A Customer I am surprised that this book has not been reviewed previously. It is an extremely important eye opener into the methods used by big business to coopt a system intended for the public good - the intellectual property system - and transform it into a new kind of feudalism whereby large corporations combine to perpetually own and tax information. The history of this effort is delineated in a way clearly understandable by the layman (me) and should be required reading by NGOs and others who are our only bulwark against this movement. The effect of the corporate effort on public health (by the pharmaceutical companies and the biopolies) and our rights to the information commons (by the computer and the entertainment industries) is laid bare. If I have a criticism, it is that not enough is said about how this frightening trend can be opposed.

In a few short years, the battle over intellectual property rights has emerged from obscurity to become front-page news. The continent-hopping, three-year court battle fought by activists to bring cheap versions of desperately needed AIDS drugs to South Africa is but one example of how this seemingly arcane area of international regulation has become a crucial battleground in the twenty-first century and is animating activists the world over. This powerful book is the definitive history of how the new global intellectual property regime the rulebook for the knowledge economy came to be. Drawing on more than five years of research and more than five hundred interviews with key figures including negotiators for First and Third World countries, leaders of multinational corporations, and public-interest experts, *Information Feudalism* uncovers the story of how a small coterie of multinational corporations wrote the charter for the global information order. *Information Feudalism* is an authoritative history of the demise of the world's intellectual commons, and a potent call for democratic property rights.

From Publishers Weekly Economic scholars Drahos and Braithwaite painstakingly trace the history of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), the international accord that has become a standard for resolving disputes over intellectual property rights, whether over bootleg videocassettes or unlicensed use of patented pharmaceutical processes. As corporations increasingly recognize copyrightable or patentable knowledge as a source of profit, they've exerted political influence to ensure that the financial reins stay within their hands. The authors clearly show how lobbyists from the entertainment industry, for example, use their clout with Washington to exert pressure on foreign markets so the U.S. industry can reap the most from films and compact discs. But these government-sanctioned "patent regimes" have resulted in an economic imbalance, which Drahos and Braithwaite depict as a "threat to liberty," where developing countries cannot afford access to medicine and technology without resorting to piracy. The authors carefully explain how copying software or making cheaper versions of patented drugs became equated with plunder on the high seas. There's frequent potential for digression, but the book stays resolutely focused on the diplomatic and corporate sides of the story, showing how less powerful countries had their interests pushed aside during the treaty process and have been reduced to dealing with a handful of intellectual property exporters who grow wealthy off poorer countries' dependency; the exporters also stifle creativity by their emphasis on exploiting economic advantage from intellectual property. The detailed account of negotiations and sanctions is highly academic, perfect for policy wonks but potentially alienating for general readers. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. "An excellent and compelling account. . . . A fascinating read for anyone interested in how the rules of the global knowledge economy are set." Oxfam "If you want to know the real politics behind the new property rights . . . read this book." Dr. Vandana Shiva, author of *Biopiracy and Protect or Plunder* "An important contribution to the ongoing concerns about colonialism and its effects on the maintenance of access to ideas and to knowledge as a public

