



The Political Economy of Information (Studies in Communication & Society)

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The "information society" is real. Information - as a marketable commodity - is quickly taking up the powerful role once held by heavy industry and manufactured products. How this revolution is affecting society, and how both society and government are responding to it, is the subject of this book. Every dimension of social life, whether in the home or the workplace, is affected by information and the technologies that shape it into a marketable commodity. Along with the positive aspects of these broad changes, there are inevitable problems: the growing gap between the information rich and poor, the need for widespread access to communication and information technology, the threat to privacy, and the potential of the technology to create global instabilities. The editors have enlisted specialists and scholars in business, communication studies, computing and information science, economics, law, library science, political science, and sociology to examine these changes and problems by looking at information specifically as a commodity. The book begins with chapters on ways of seeing and thinking about information in the light of developments in computer communication technology. The ability of the technology to measure and monitor information transactions and to package and repackage information products leads to fresh views on the nature of industrial society, perhaps leading to the development of what Robins and Webster refer to as "cybernetic capitalism". These theoretical chapters are followed by studies that identify and examine specific problems in the political economy of information. These include how business is making information a marketable commodity, how government is responding to this development, the implications for access to information, privacy, social class divisions, and specific impacts on the home and workplace. The concluding chapters consider the global significance of transforming information into a marketable product with specific studies on Europe, Asia, and the efforts of Third World nations to overcome disparities in the information society.

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