

Overall, the book represents a commendable achievement. The volume offers many thought-provoking ideas and responds to the questions by offering a unique approach to problems of significance and value. Two criticisms: first, the attempt to link our modern cultural condition with that experienced by the ancients places many irons in the fire and, as is only to be expected, some claims may need further investigation, while others have the potential for controversy. Second, the book suffers from a lack of adequate copyediting that has resulted in numerous typos and glitches that seriously impinge on readability. Otherwise, this is a fine book and a significant contribution to the field of media ecology.

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DIGATION: IDENTITY, ORGANIZATION, AND PUBLIC LIFE IN THE AGE OF SMALL DIGITAL DEVICES AND BIG DIGITAL DOMAINS,
ROBERT C. MACDOUGALL (2014)

Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 304 pp.,

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Reviewed by Brett Lunceford, Independent scholar

With a name like *Digation*, one may reasonably think that this book would be a celebration of the online world. This would be incorrect; in contrast to the celebratory books that often fill the shelves of bookstores, this is a much more cautiously optimistic examination of our online media landscape. Having followed MacDougall's work for several years myself, this comes as no surprise, as I have long found his work to be thoughtful and carefully researched, with a knack for distilling the implications of a particular issue. This book offers not only an examination of several case studies but also a discussion of what these cases illustrate about our culture, our society and democratic practice. What is at stake here for MacDougall is the very nature of democracy itself as it is manifest in the online world and how this online world intersects with the offline world. As he explains in the conclusion of the book,

We are moving headlong into a world constituted more everyday by digital information exchange. Given this, we need to be cognizant of the changing nature of identity, the different forms of social, cognitive, and political organization now emerging, and what it means to be a citizen of Digation today.

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The title *Digination*, then, is more than just a catchy neologism that provides a pithy title to his book. Rather, MacDougall is grappling with the big questions of how the online world is shaping our offline world and what this means for society as a whole. One can see the variety of ways that this plays out in the cases that he chose for the book. After setting the stage with two introductory chapters that lay out his conception of Digination and placing it in conversation with such scholars as Marshall McLuhan and James Carey, he then sets out with a host of case studies. First, he considers e-mail use in a Native American tribe, exploring the interplay between culture and technology use. Next, he considers how blogs have altered our perception of what counts for news, followed by a related chapter on the changing nature of information and news. He then turns his attention to search engine algorithms, continuing his discussion of how information is structured, but through the lens of the social contract. Shifting from the macro level to the micro level, we move on to a discussion of portable music players and how these devices reconfigure time and space, then to a related chapter on podcasts that draws on Walter Ong's notion of secondary orality. Next, we have a brief chapter on technology (and knitting) in the classroom, and the biological limitations of multitasking. The final case study examines participation in eBay auctions and the panoptic function of buyer and seller feedback. He concludes the book by tying all of these cases together and considering the question of what a sustainable Digination could look like.

Like any book, it certainly has strengths and weaknesses. One limitation of this book is shared by every other book that I have read on emerging technologies: by the time the book gets into print, the technologies have moved on to somewhere else, and often in ways that one would not anticipate. Moore's law suggests that computing power doubles every 18–24 months, so this is unsurprising considering that the process of writing a book is often much longer than this time frame. This is one issue with using case studies; it is almost impossible for them to not seem dated by the time the book is in print, especially when considering technology. That said, the main benefit of this book is not in the specific insights concerning the cases themselves. These insights are there, of course, and they are useful. But a good case study is useful mainly for what it illustrates in general – in this instance, these case studies indicate the directions in which these technologies are moving us and the potential impact and unintended consequences of these technologies. As MacDougall explains in his discussion of eBay, the chapter is not about *eBay* alone. It also highlights important relationships between the concepts of citizen, consumer, and socio-political actor today, and considers the significance these social roles might play in a full-fledged *digital democracy* of tomorrow' (223). Indeed, throughout the book MacDougall deftly illustrates that these technologies are merely symptoms of the macro-level changes that are taking place in society.

This leads into the core strength of this book, which is MacDougall's ability to capture the larger mosaic in which these cases are only a small part. This book is a careful examination of not only these specific technologies but also the technological landscape as a whole. He wisely resists both the technophilic cheerleading often found in such books and the pessimism found in others, taking a balanced approach to the technologies and asking pointed questions that bring us to a greater understanding of these phenomena. As MacDougall explains in the opening pages of the book, '[t]he argument here is that the introduction or removal of any means of communication tends to create reverberations throughout the entire cultural system' (1). It is this systemic

approach that I found particularly useful. The cases are not meant to stand alone; we are invited to see how they function within the larger technological landscape. Another strength of the book is the methodological pluralism MacDougall employs. He brings in everything from traditional ethnography to social scientific approaches to historical and critical approaches to experimental design in examining these case studies. This allows him to avoid some of the methodological blind spots that can occur when one relies on only one method.

Overall, this is a solid work of media ecology scholarship that exemplifies the systemic thinking that media ecology celebrates. Rather than looking at one or two technologies, MacDougall takes the long view, inviting the reader to see how these specific technologies are merely indicators that provide clues about our larger media landscape. It is well written and would be accessible to an undergraduate audience. This book would be of particular use to scholars working in the areas of democratic practice, digital identity and technology and social change.

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FAKE NEWS IN REAL CONTEXT, PAUL LEVINSON (2017)

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Reviewed by Lisa Nocks, IEEE History Center

Shortly after his 2016 election to the US presidency, Donald Trump began accusing anyone who questioned his personal behaviour, his past business dealings, or the veracity of his campaign pledges of disseminating 'fake news'. The press, in turn, picked up the phrase to characterize deliberately false statements made by Trump and his allies, while his staff spun the facts in creative ways. For example, when historical data disproved press secretary Sean Spicer's claim that Trump's inauguration attracted the largest public turnout in history, Trump's counsellor Kellyanne Conway defended Spicer's claim as 'alternative facts' (NBC News 2017). Soon, thousands of journalists, political bloggers and broadcast news commentators attacked that level of linguistic spin and joined in the current 'Fake News' discourse. Among them, Paul Levinson offered *Fake News in Real Context*. The quickly unfolding events surrounding the election data and accusations hurled by both supporters and opponents of the president clearly inspired this work, a six-chapter ebook that is essentially a balancing act between Levinson's long-held, strong defence