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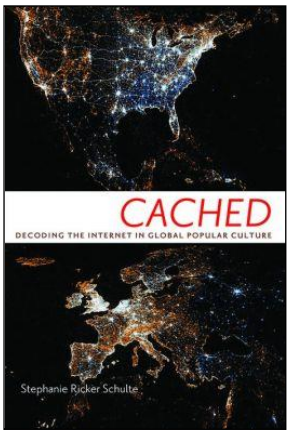
Stephanie Ricker Schulte, **Cached: Decoding the Internet in Global Popular Culture,** New York and London: New York University Press, 2013, 261 pp, $24.00 (paperback).

Reviewed by
Bessie Chu
University of Southern California



In ***Cached: Decoding the Internet in Global Popular Culture,*** Stephanie Ricker Schulte challenges the notion of the Internet as a "static medium" or just a technology. She posits that cultural and political actors define the Internet and other technologies.

Schulte targets readers who are curious about how policy, popular culture, journalism, economics, and politics shaped the Internet. She uses a cultural studies, narrative approach to show the ways in which these factors influenced how the Internet is viewed. These perceptions, then, affected how the Internet evolved. This book is not a study about the impact of the technological capabilities of the Internet.

Schulte begins by briefly describing the Internet in its formative stages during the 1980s, arguing that

> actors ranging from corporations, the military, journalists, popular culture producers, to computer users themselves became involved in defining what the Internet was, what it meant for users, the nation, and the economy, and what it could and should be in the future. (p. 5)

The approach for dealing with the Internet becomes clear in the section "The War Games Scenario: Regulating Teenagers and Teenaged Technology." She argues that the 1983 film *War Games* colored the first perceptions of the Internet. In *War Games*, a teenage hacker nearly starts a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union, mistaking the government computer he hacked into for a computer game. Computer users and the Internet are portrayed in a "teenager" scenario gone awry, marking how policymakers and the public dealt with technology. This infantilized view, laced with "hacker hysteria," reflected Cold War-era fears and economic anxieties (p. 25). The author cites Senator Bill Nelson who considered hacking a creative, yet misdirected skill, but who also saw that nurturing this creativity could promote national security and economic gains. This happened while U.S. policymakers, fearing Japanese economic ascendance, sought to boost U.S. education achievements. Still, many considered rising stars Steve Jobs and Bill Gates as antiestablishment teenagers even as they used computer technology to boost U.S. economic prosperity. The teenage hacker paradigm helped shape how the public saw Internet.

Starting in the mid-1980s, sentiment in popular culture shifted. The section "The Internet Grows Up and Goes to Work: User-Friendly Tools for Productive Adults" shows the Internet as a tool that boosts productivity, thus ensuring America's economic future. Dystopian films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey*

(1969), *Blade Runner* (1982), and *Terminator* (1984) projected an oppressive view of technology. Corporate advertising by IBM, Apple, and others helped reframe these perceptions. IBM used Charlie Chaplin's depression era Tramp character in ads that were designed to assuage "anxieties about using computers to monitor humans and treated humans like machines" (p. 65). Apple's breakout Super Bowl commercial echoed *1984,* featuring images of rebellion against Orwellian conformity to show that Apple was different. Representations of technology during this phase shifted between an Orwellian state and "corporations wanting to show a computer as a friend and not a sentient" (p. 62). News media and legislators framed the growth of computing as a progress narrative that would enable the United States to compete with Japanese manufacturing. Schulte argues that computing technology was then considered a tool to be used by adult workers to boost productivity and not by teenaged hackers.

The book's next section, "From Computers to Cyberspace: Virtual Reality, the Virtual Nation, and the CorpoNation," describes the formation of the modern Internet beginning in the mid-1990s. The terms "World Wide Web" and "Information Superhighway" became popular. Discussions about globalization and the weakening of the state proliferated. Pop culture depicted this world, as imagined in the James Bond films *Golden Eye* (1995) and *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), where Agent 007 teams up with hackers to fight national terrorists and evil corporations. Schulte identifies this period in terms of the rise of the "corpoNation," which works transnationally, in "advertisements and lobbyists in the new purveyors of American idealism, business practices, culture, and technology to the consuming public" (p. 108). The state's power is diminished, but corpoNations act on behalf of the state both as benevolent democratizing forces and as reinforcing, sometimes oppressive, national agendas. The author argues that America Online and Microsoft defined the 1990s and early 2000s Internet, demonstrating these two dynamics, respectively. The Internet became a harbinger of globalization, and corpoNations emerged as agents of the state.

Schulte shifts across the Atlantic to compare U.S. and European Internet developments in "Self-Colonizing Europe: The Information Society Merges Onto the Information Superhighway." Early European Internet formation and media images reflected the particular cultures of individual member states. This overlapped with the dynamics of treating the Internet as an option—not as an inevitability—and as a tool for local use. The hacker protagonist in the German film *Halbe Miete* (2002) reflects the legacy of German anticapitalism, abandoning technology by flinging his laptop into the Rhine River. He finds love and happiness in an offline life rooted in the natural world. In contrast, American protagonists ultimately use technology to defeat evil. Opposed to American ideals of a global Internet, the creators of De Digitale Stad (Digital City Amsterdam), a civic website, used only Dutch in its content, never other languages. Europeans responded to the "Information Superhighway" with their version: a Europeanized "Information Society." Themes from local popular culture and localized practices by governments defined the Internet in Europe as different from that of U.S. historical trends.

Schulte returns to the American Internet of 2000–2010 in "Tweeting into the Future: Affecting Citizens and the Networking Revolution" and argues that participatory culture reflects today's American Internet. The rise of blogs and Twitter, she notes, reflect a desire for the authentic, a need to fight news media inaccuracies, and to act as a watchdog of the government. She also writes that citizens fear that as "blogs became more popular, corporate entities would colonize, copy, or pollute them and would thereby

strip blogs of their authenticity" (p. 147). The rise of the participatory culture of the Internet culminated of both the 2008 election of Barack Obama and of the Arab Spring. The author notes that these movements were framed in a uniquely positive American narrative that was dominated by the corpoNation. The Facebook Revolution and coverage

> metaphorically extended the American virtual nation through corpoNation. But the frame also highlighted the ways Egyptians at home and abroad participated in diasporic nation-building in the ways coverage tapped visions and options about the protests from a variety of sources. (p. 141)

For Americans, "There was something beautiful and magical in thinking that the same medium that connected Americans to friends and family was the same medium that connected individuals abroad (and) had allowed them to improve their lives" (p. 158). As global online use increased, so did transnational activism. Schulte argues that this period reflected not only America's anxiety at losing hegemony over the Internet but also the U.S. desire to continue soft power dominance by claiming the achievements of those using the creations of American corpoNations as a triumph of American ideals.

Schulte concludes by applying the ideas from each of the historical responses to the Wikileaks scandal. She notes that journalistic coverage of WikiLeaks "presented Assange as mildly adolescent, as a petite, irresponsible, moody, and difficult to work with," reminiscent of the "teenage technology" discourse. The threat of WikiLeaks also "stemmed in part from its perceived post-nationalism" (p. 166). Yet, "WikiLeaks emblemized early news media fantasies of the best of what the blogosphere could offer" (p. 167). The author views the competition between Mark Zuckerberg and Julian Assange to be named *TIME Magazine*'s Person of the Year as embodying the dichotomy of the Internet itself: a symbol of transnational means of activism versus a driver of U.S. dominance and capitalism (p. 168).

The strengths of *Cached: Decoding the Internet in Global Popular Culture* lie in its rich, detailed, engaging, and engrossing stories of the Internet. Schulte convincingly shows technology as a product of historical legacies, as well as cultural and politics. However, the narrative is often choppy, jumping back and forth between theory and history. The European overview feels out of place after the rich detail of the previous sections, so there is no real global overview presented, despite the volume's title. Although the book is not about technology, a more thorough examination of how technology affected popular culture would have been welcome.

This book is meant for readers interested in how popular culture informs perceptions and actions surrounding technology. It examines how popular culture evolved with technology, how journalistic coverage soon followed, and how perceptions of this new technology seeped into policymaking. It makes a strong case that popular culture and the Internet are intricately linked.