



Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy (NONE)

By Robert W. McChesney

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Celebrants and skeptics alike have produced valuable analyses of the Internet's effect on us and our world, oscillating between utopian bliss and dystopian hell. But according to Robert W. McChesney, arguments on both sides fail to address the relationship between economic power and the digital world.

McChesney's award-winning *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* skewered the assumption that a society drenched in commercial information is a democratic one. In *Digital Disconnect*, McChesney returns to this provocative thesis in light of the advances of the digital age. He argues that the sharp decline in the enforcement of antitrust violations, the increase in patents on digital technology and proprietary systems and massive indirect subsidies and other policies have made the internet a place of numbing commercialism. A handful of monopolies now dominate the political economy, from Google, which garners a 97 percent share of the mobile search market, to Microsoft, whose operating system is used by over 90 percent of the world's computers. Capitalism's colonization of the Internet has spurred the collapse of credible journalism and made the Internet an unparalleled apparatus for government and corporate surveillance and a disturbingly antidemocratic force.

In *Digital Disconnect*, Robert McChesney offers a groundbreaking critique of the Internet, urging us to reclaim the democratizing potential of the digital revolution while we still can.

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Editorial Review

Review

Advance Praise for *Digital Disconnect*:

"Once again, McChesney stands at the crossroads of media dysfunction and the denial of democracy, illuminating the complex issues involved and identifying a path forward to try to repair the damage. Here's hoping the rest of us have the good sense to listen this time."

—Eric Alterman, professor of English and journalism, Brooklyn College, CUNY

"McChesney penetrates to the heart of the issue: Change the System/Change the Internet. Both/And—not Either/Or. Indispensable reading as we lay groundwork for the coming great movement to reclaim America."

—Gar Alperovitz, author of *What Then Must We Do? Straight Talk About the Next American Revolution*, and professor of political economy, University of Maryland

"A provocative and far-reaching account of how capitalism has shaped the Internet in the United States. . . . a valuable addition to the literature on the digital age."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Too often discussions about the democratic potential of the digital revolution treat the Internet and related communication technologies as if they existed in a vacuum. *Digital Disconnect* disabuses us of this notion, making a convincing case that one can only understand these technologies and how they are used through the lens of political economy, and that the capitalist political economy in which they are currently embedded in the United States is anathema to a truly democratic information environment."

—Michael X. DelliCarpini, dean, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

"A major new work by one of the nation's leading analysts of media... . Steering between the treacherous Scylla and Charbydis of Internet boosters and skeptics, McChesney shows how the economic context of the digital environment is making the difference between an open and democratic internet, and one which is manipulated for private gain. A hard-to-put-down, meticulously researched must-read."

—Juliet Schor, author of *True Wealth: How and Why Millions of Americans Are Creating a Time-Rich, Ecologically Light, Small-Scale, High-Satisfaction Economy*

"If you're concerned about democracy or the direction of the Internet, this is the book for you! With a panoramic sweep and profound insights, McChesney rings the alarm bells, showing clearly how capitalism is swallowing up the promise of the Internet. No one knows this field better than McChesney, and with this book he has reached the pinnacle."

—Matthew Rothschild, editor, *The Progressive*

"Over the past twenty years, the world has experienced both a profound communications revolution delivered by the internet and an equally profound rise in economic inequality and instability delivered by neoliberal capitalism. *Digital Disconnect* explores the connections between these epoch-defining trends with clarity, depth, originality, and verve. Robert W. McChesney advances a strong case that achieving the potential of the internet as a force for good requires nothing less than unshackling it from the capitalist social order now defining its trajectory."

—Robert Pollin, professor of economics and co-director, Political Economy Research Institute (PERI), University of Massachusetts-Amherst

About the Author

Robert W. McChesney is the Gutsell Endowed Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of several books on the media, including the award-winning *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* and *Communication Revolution*, and a co-editor (with Victor Pickard) of *Will the Last Reporter Please Turn Out the Lights*. He lives in Champaign, Illinois.

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Aaron Thomsen:

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