

plans to further relax media consolidation laws. With the exception of the Iraq War, Congress noted that the FCC's deceitful activity was the most important issue to their constituencies in 2003. In June of this year, "both Congress and the courts repudiated the FCC's reckless decision on media ownership."

McChesney's arguments are logical and his evidence abundant, making his conclusions convincing. He posits that the media are an antidemocratic force in America today because they promote hypercommercialism and depoliticize society. Yet his book is not simply an indictment of manipulative right-wing politicians and greedy owners of media supercompanies. He reminds us that "media reform and campaigns for social justice are inexorably linked," and suggests that the small victories of the recent past can sustain hope of future victory for those who believe a strong democracy provides high-quality media representing a variety of viewpoints. He reminds us that we have the power to ensure our Republic remains "for the people." —Kurt H. Cumiskey, *North Carolina State University*.

Vaidhyathan, Siva. *The Anarchist in the Library: How the Clash between Freedom and Control Is Hacking the Real World and Crashing the System*. New York: Basic Books, 2004. 253p. \$26 (ISBN 0465089844). LC 2003-26089.

Siva Vaidhyathan is a professor of communications studies at New York University; he got considerable and deserved visibility for his very nice 2001 book *Copyrights and Copywrongs: The Rise of Intellectual Property and How it Threatens Creativity*. That book was a wide-ranging history and social analysis of copyright in the United States and was, in my view, particularly insightful in its coverage of how copyright was progressively extended from textual works to various kinds of still and moving images and to music. One of the great strengths of *Copyrights and Copywrongs* was that Vaidhyathan, who is not (as far as I

know) an attorney, and certainly doesn't write like one, really focused on broader issues of culture, society, ethics, and economics that are implicated in the steady extensions of copyright and intellectual property. He wrote a lively book that was highly accessible to nonspecialist readers and that insisted our cultural goals should shape law, rather than allowing the technical logic of law to blindly determine the evolution of our society. *Copyrights and Copywrongs* forms an excellent complement and companion to a number of other outstanding books for the general reader that have come out over the past few years from thoughtful attorneys, such as Larry Lessig and James Boyle, concerned with the future of copyright and what it's doing to our society. (Pam Samuelson's articles also deserve a special place here.) Copyright has become a complex, pervasive, contentious, and crucial issue; and I think we need many more voices from beyond the legal profession engaged in the debate about its future. Vaidhyathan has been one important such voice and has done a good deal of public speaking on these topics (including talks at the ALA meetings) as well as writing books.

This brings us to *The Anarchist in the Library*, which I found to be a perhaps more ambitious, but certainly less focused and more frustrating, book than its predecessor. Vaidhyathan actually engages the evolution of the book directly in its concluding chapter, saying: "This book was supposed to be about entertainment—the battle over control of digital music, text, and video—an extension of my first book." But the events of 9/11 and their aftermath refocused his attention on what he describes as "information politics" as opposed to what he calls "entertainment politics," and indeed the book ranges over topics from copyright to philosophies of anarchism, from the future of nation-states to information warfare, from peer-to-peer technology to some really fascinating discussion of global cultural issues. (See especially chapter 7, "Culture as Anarchy.") The

scope of the book is enormous, eclectic, and a bit idiosyncratic, though often without great depth. The book includes good coverage of the music industry and peer-to-peer copyright battles of the past few years for those who have not been tracking them in the newspapers; it seems accurate and offers a good synthesis, but little new information. There's probably less about libraries and librarians than one would expect from the title.

I can't but admire the author's desire and ambition to engage the big and important issues and to try to draw connections between them, but I have to say that Vaidhyathan seems considerably more credible, informed, and insightful on some issues than others; the book is uneven in both depth and sophistication. This is made infinitely more annoying by a tone and rhetorical technique that appears repeatedly; other people's work is simply ridiculed rather than seriously engaged, using a sort of appeal that says that any truly smart person knows that this is obviously idiotic, so it's not necessary to belabor the point. This technique lets Vaidhyathan trash very complex sets of ideas to be disposed of by trotting out a single totemic work and then dismissing it. Consider "Samuel Huntington expresses this same oligarchic theory of culture in his dangerously simplistic yet influential book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*." He's similarly dismissive of Robert Kaplan's work *The Coming Anarchy*. And then there is the (to my mind) embarrassingly superficial discussion of asymmetric and information-based warfare and net war, which seems to suggest, just in passing, that it's unthinkable (and unthinkably wrong) for the United States to mount a disinformation campaign and that this conclusion should be clear to anyone with any sense at all. I don't think that the issues or right answers in any of these areas are simple or obvious; if he's going to engage them, they deserve a much deeper, more serious, and more comprehensive treatment than they receive in *The Anarchist in the Library*.

Vaidhyathan is also not terribly credible as a cheerleader for technology and the "internet way" (consider the odd discussion about the future of the Internet and features of the TCP/IP protocols), where he joins many other people in extrapolating from technical engineering choices to social and political conclusions. This is a particularly dicey business unless one is utterly authoritative on the foundational technical issues and events. Also included in the same section are strange and stunning, but unsourced, statements about unnamed "White House Officials revealed they had considered completely redesigning the internet and licensing its use." If this was a serious prospect, it's fairly astounding and more specifics, such as who was promoting the idea and when, would have been most valuable. (I'm certainly aware of some of the discussions about Internet security and cyber security more broadly in the wake of 9/11, but I think this is the first I've heard of proposals to actually license Internet use.)

Having said all that, I believe this is a book worth reading. It's not a great book, but it's a book that contains a few gems, one that should make the reader do some thinking and one that, for all of its annoying aspects, comes across as a good-hearted, optimistic, idealistic, and likeable book. The sheer grace and graciousness of the acknowledgments, for example, are a joy. Vaidhyathan's writing is clear and lively, though altogether too clever occasionally, and at its worst, too reliant on rhetoric rather than reasoned argument; but this book is a fast, entertaining read. Anyone who's been following copyright, intellectual property, and related information policy issues in the paper will find much that's familiar here, but also at least a few things that are new and some new approaches to well-known events. There are good stories, and interesting connections; I loved the discussion of the comparison of Canadian and U.S. cultural policies, for example. If you are looking for an introduction to the issues around intellectual

property in the digital world, however, this is not the place to start. You would be better served by the author's earlier book or the books by Boyle or Lessig, for example, even though they are now a little dated. If you do read *The Anarchist in the Library*, plan to read it critically, even though the author's very real rhetorical talents will make this difficult. The concluding chapter is, I think, particularly well done and serves both reader and author as a great opportunity to reassess the book's views and arguments. The

final chapter is concise and honest, and feels like the author was trying to come to terms with the book he had just written and with all the (mostly ugly) ways the world changed while he was writing it. In doing this, he implicitly invites the reader to contemplate the same changes and span of time. I very much look forward to Vaidhyanthan's next book and to seeing where the intellectual journey chronicled in *The Anarchist in the Library* leads him. —Clifford A. Lynch, *Coalition for Networked Information*.