

DIGITAL MEDIA AND SOCIETY

A useful and enriching tool

Review by Robert Brand

A number of excellent texts in recent years have addressed the issue of ethics in digital media¹. These works have tended to focus on the news media, but in *Digital Media Ethics*, author Charles Ess casts his net wider. The book, the second in the *Digital Media and Society* series, examines ethical issues in digital media ranging from social networking to video games.

Ess, a Distinguished Research Professor of Interdisciplinary Study at Drury University in Springfield, Missouri, takes a multidisciplinary approach to his subject. *Digital Media Ethics*, the author states in the preface, is intended for use primarily in philosophy and applied ethics classes, but also in a range of other disciplines, including media, communication, computer science and library science. "The goal," he writes, "is to provide students and instructors in a wide range of disciplines with a first introduction to important ethical issues associated with digital media." In this, the book certainly succeeds.

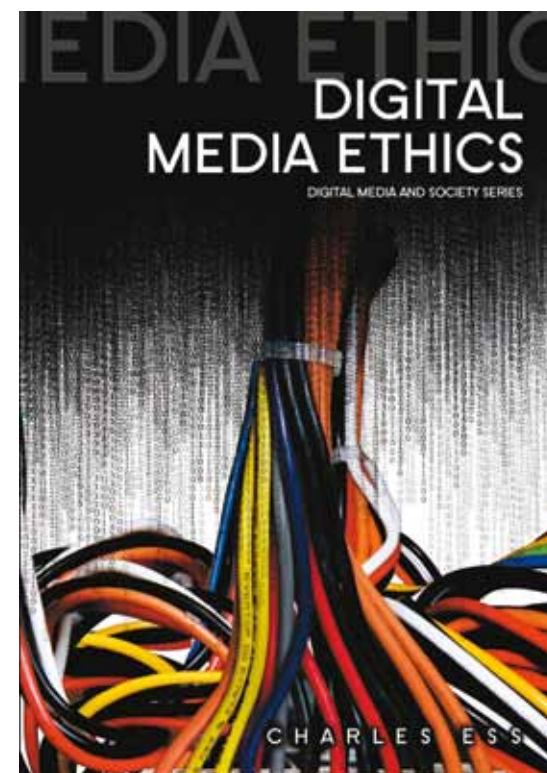
The first five chapters introduce readers to the charac-

teristics of digital media and the ethical challenges arising out of those; privacy in the "electronic global metropolis"; copyright; freedom of expression; and pornography. The final chapter is a useful outline of the meta-ethical and normative frameworks that are commonly used in applied ethics, including journalism ethics. The last chapter alone would make *Digital Media Ethics* a worthy addition to shelf of any journalism ethics teacher.

While the book is intended as a primer, or first introduction to ethical issues, it makes copious use of case studies, accompanied by questions for discussion, reflection and writing exercises which invite and encourage further research. This, again, makes it a useful tool for the teacher of journalism or media ethics, even though the majority of case studies are not from the news media. The media or journalism scholar may gripe with Ess' failure to distinguish between communication media and communication tools – he refers, for example, to "digital media such as cell phones and video games."

Nevertheless, he succeeds in providing conceptual frameworks that could be applied to a diverse range of media making. As such, the book is a useful addition to the literature on applied ethics in general and media ethics in particular, and teachers of journalism and media ethics are sure to find much in it to enrich their own understanding and teaching.

1. See, for example, Berkman, R. and Shumway, C. 2003. *Digital dilemmas: ethical issues for online media professionals*. Ames: Iowa State Press; and Friend, C. and Singer, J. 2007. *Online journalism ethics: traditions and transitions*. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.

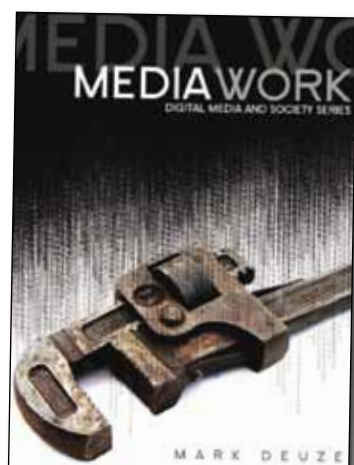


Digital Media Ethics

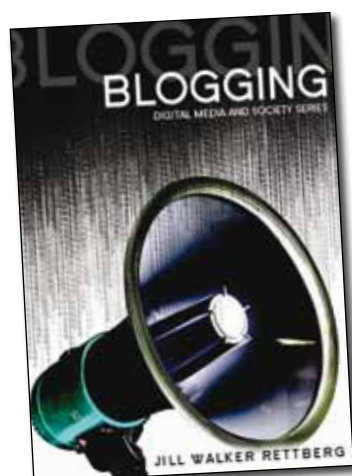
by Charles Ess

CHARLES ESS' *DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS* IS PUBLISHED BY POLITY AS PART OF ITS DIGITAL MEDIA AND SOCIETY SERIES. AIMING TO BROADEN THE READERSHIP OF THE LATEST RESEARCH AND THINKING ON DIGITAL MEDIA AND THEIR SOCIAL NETWORKS, THE SERIES EXAMINES QUESTIONS AROUND THE INFLUENCE OF NETWORK TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL MEDIA ON SOCIETY, INCLUDING ECONOMICALLY, CULTURALLY AND POLITICALLY.

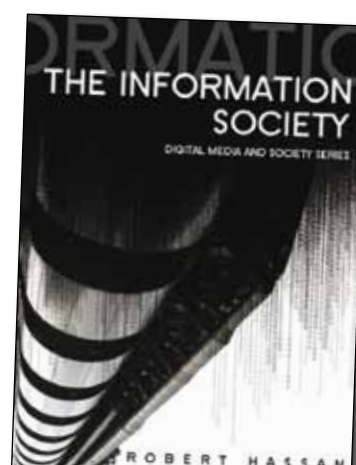
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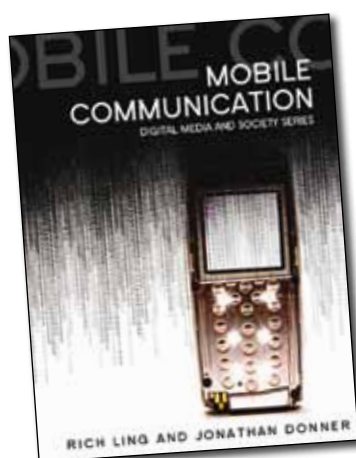
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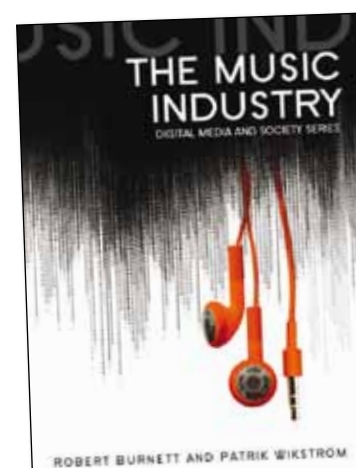
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