BOOK REVIEWS

THE INTERNET ON EARTH: A GEOGRAPHY OF INFORMATION by Aharon Kellerman. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2002.

The Internet on Earth: A Geography of Information by Aharon Kellerman was published by Wiley in Fall 2002 and represents the first significant analysis of the geography of the Internet and information society. *The Internet on Earth* fills a void in geographic literature by placing a common and increasingly significant phenomenon, the Internet, in spatial context. As Aharon Kellerman notes in the preface, the objective of the book is to present a "...conventional geography on a slightly unconventional geographic topic, information" (p. xi). When cyberspace is often presented or discussed in terms of a lack of spatial or geographic context, it is essential that the role of space be understood when analyzing this phenomenon. At its core, the book presents a powerful argument in support of an information or Internet geography. Once the structure of the Internet is analyzed, it becomes very clear that geography plays an important role in shaping the location and conditions of information production and consumption.

The central contribution of the volume is to provide a spatial framework for understanding the production and consumption of information, and to establish the importance of the study of information as a subject worthy of geographical analysis. *The Internet on Earth* starts with a well-constructed analysis of the relationship between technology and society, emphasizing the potential for computer and Internet technologies to have a fundamental impact on the nature and organization of society. In the first three chapters, Kellerman discusses the context for information society, the nature of space and place, and the technologies employed in the production, transmission, and consumption of information.

Among the most important chapters in the book are those on production (Ch. 4) and contents (Ch. 5), which provide a conceptual framework for understanding information production and the nature of Internet content. In addition to outlining the characteristics of how information is produced and managed, the book gathers data from many disparate sources to illustrate the scale of geographic variation in the information economy. While information is the target of this analysis, readers familiar with the subject area will recognize the ironic dearth of data on this very topic. Kellerman presents geographic data on information society for cities, regions, and countries, and in so doing not only reinforces his thesis but also underscores the scarcity of data sources available for spatial analysis.

After discussing the nature and production of information, *The Internet on Earth* in chapter six addresses the geography of information transmission, and the physical infrastructure of the wired world. The Internet networks and backbones are often the most tangible element of cyberspace, for they are one of the few components of information society that can be easily mapped and even seen. The following chapter presents data on the leading nations in terms of communications use, and the counterpoint of the digital divide for countries and locations that do not have access to telecommunications and the Internet. Continuing from the discussion of the digital divide is Chapter Eight's analysis of the consumption of information and the different ways that the Internet is used.

The Internet is often analyzed in terms of its ability to minimize the friction of distance, yet this ability should not be confused with a diminution of place. Kellerman shows how the underlying geographical forces of location, movement, physical and political borders, and place all shape the evolution of the Internet and remain powerful forces in its development. Far from being an aspatial phenomenon, the Internet is shown to be very much a product of the geography of its technology and infrastructure, as well as the economic geography of the production and consumption of information. The *Internet on Earth* reminds us of the contribution geography can make to our understanding of contemporary society. Kellerman utilizes the strengths of geographic analysis to explain many dimensions of the Internet at a time when most analysts fail to even recognize the relevance of spatial forces to our understanding of information technologies.

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GEOPOLITICS OF THE WORLD SYSTEM by Saul B. Cohen. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

The study of geopolitics has undergone a renaissance during the past decade. What was once a blackballed and forgotten discipline, due to its past associations with the Haushoferian school of German Geopolitik, has found its way back as a major area of scientific research. This is reflected in the many texts dealing with both Political Geography and Geopolitics which have been published, as well as the growth of international journals in this field of study. These deal with a broad range of topics from the traditional study of geostrategy, the reassessment of classical geopolitical thinkers, such as Friedrich Ratzel and Halford Mackinder (both of whom have regained their scientific legitimacy in their respective centenary years), to the contemporary writings of critical or 'new' geopolitics much of which is based on discourse analysis of governments, foreign policy makers and the ways in which the changing world map is represented through popular images in the media, textbooks and in cyberspace.