

THE INTERNET GALAXY



Categoría:	Informática
Plaza de edición:	OXFORD
ISBN:	9780199255771
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Año edición:	2003
Lengua:	INGLÉS
Nº de páginas:	292 págs.
Editorial:	OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Castells, best known for his three-volume study *The Information Age* (Blackwell), an analysis of societal changes wrought by communications advances, trims that work to appeal to readers who were daunted by its 1,200 pages, \$80 paperback price and ponderous prose. In this excellent, readable, nontechnical summary of the history, social implications and likely future of Internet business, Castells, professor of planning and of sociology at Berkeley, covers institutions like the World Wide Web Consortium, which 'presides over the protocols and development' of the Web, and phenomena like the Internet's immense ability to simultaneously liberate and exclude. There are still too many sentences like 'It is fair to say that most hackers live normal lives, at least as normal as most people, which does not necessarily mean that hackers (or anybody else) fit into the ideal type of normalcy, conforming to the dominant ideology in our societies,' leaving readers wondering if hackers' lives are normal or not, and whether he's trying to give a sociological side lesson. Those willing to overlook such prosodic lapses will appreciate the astute accounts of, e.g., the complications for early grassroots online citizen networks headed by community activists, but seen by many as an opportunity to move beyond their local community.'