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**William Dutton (ed.):
The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013**

**Jeremy Hunsinger and Theresa Senft (eds.):
The Social Media Handbook.
New York: Routledge, 2014**

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The field of Internet studies has evolved into a genuine, although not clearly delimited, discipline. Important theoretical and, not least, ethical debates about the field have taken place within the *Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR)*, which has held yearly conferences since 2000. No discipline without one or several handbooks. Two such handbooks have already been published, *The International Handbook of Internet Research*, edited by Jeremy Hunsinger and Lisbeth Klastrup (2010) and *The Handbook of Internet Studies*, edited by Mia Consalvo and Charles Ess (2011), both reviewed by me in *MedieKultur* vol. 52, pp. 193-196.

These titles already suggest that there is no agreement on the name of the discipline: Internet Studies or Internet Research, two terms which have often been used randomly. Another schism is whether to focus on subjects of internet research/studies or applied methods. The two previous handbooks focused on both, more successfully so in the latter than in the former.

It is a strength of both present handbooks that from the outset they focus on subjects rather than methods, leaving the latter focus to the many fine works within the field, for instance Markham and Baym's *Internet Inquiry* (2008), Richard Rogers' *Digital Methods* (2013) or the *Sage Handbook of Online Research Methods* (2008).

The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies, originating from the renowned Oxford Internet Institute at the University of Oxford and edited by the previous director (2002-11) William Dutton, focuses on the entire Internet rather than, on the more narrow field of social media, as does the volume to be discussed below.

With the thoroughness and academic rigour typical of works originating from the famous university, it systematically goes through an impressive number of topics. Although the quality of the individual chapters will often vary in an edited volume, the contributions appear consistent and truthful to the overall outline of the book. The editor has done a good job.

In the long introduction by William Dutton, the rising field of Internet studies is discussed and defined. He starts with a useful table of the multiple focuses of Internet Studies, demonstrating the breadth as well as the scope of the field. The chapter is epistemologically and disciplinary tolerant, presenting multiple perspectives on the field rather than suggesting privileged positions. This is an affordable luxury in a giant work like this but still deserves to be praised as this is rarely seen. Furthermore, the introduction provides an overview of the book and argues for the structure and relevance of each part and subsequent chapters.

The book is divided into five main parts: Perspectives on the Internet and web as objects of study, social life in the network society, creating and working in the network economy, communication power and influence in a converging world and governing and regulation of the Internet. As such, it starts with the foundations, the history and the infrastructure of the Internet and moves through social, economic and communicative issues, ultimately focusing on the future of democracy and governance. As a political scientist, I might be biased, but I will argue that this is a logical pattern of progress in a work like this.

There is not enough space to mention each of the altogether 26 chapters within the five parts. Instead, I will emphasize some of the most important contributions. Although this is not a book on research methods, it still seems relevant that several chapters in the first part discuss the structure and characteristics of the Internet as this provides the foundation as well as the challenges for Internet research. Chapters by Kieron o'Hara and Mike Thelwall focus on the material conditions as well as the dynamics inherent in the Internet.

In part 2, chapter 8 is worth mentioning in particular, "Sociality through social network sites" by Nicole Ellison and Danah Boyd. Here, they provide a much-needed update of their 2007 definition of social network sites, probably soon becoming established as a new authoritative definition of the phenomenon.

Part 3 focuses on such different topics as business, government, scholarship and learning. Paul Henman provides an overview of E-government, from a theoretical as well as an empirical perspective. It appears that E-government is Janus-faced as it implies openness, efficiency and cost-cutting as well as enhanced surveillance and new mechanisms for regulation and control. Eric Meyer and Ralph Schroeder give an overview of how the digital landscape transforms scholarship and knowledge. They are themselves renowned within

that field and provide a refreshing perspective going beyond present hyped “big data” discussions.

In part 4, the authors deal with issues of power and democracy. Chapter 18 addresses the highly relevant topic of the changes in news production and consumption, which are about to transform journalism forever. Another chapter gives an overview of the Internet in campaigns and elections. Finally, the present director of the Oxford Internet Institute, Helen Margetts discusses Internet and democracy from an overall theoretical perspective.

This leads to part 5, which focuses on the governing and regulation of the Internet that might not be compatible with dominant normative concepts of democracy. As discussed by Victoria Nash, freedom of expression might be interpreted differently in various corners of the globalized network society as contemporary conferences of Internet governance clearly demonstrate. Several chapters revolve around such issues. When China aims for more control of the Internet infrastructure, this is for political rather than technical reasons. The era of the free unregulated Internet might be over, and the world is up for grabs. Chapter 23 by Colin Bennett and Christopher Parsons discusses issues of privacy and surveillance, which is more relevant than ever in a world where more than one billion people have joined social network sites, potentially sacrificing privacy for convenience.

At the back, the Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies has an extensive index, which is indispensable in a work like this.

The Social Media Handbook, edited and mostly written by key figures in the Association of Internet Researchers, focuses, as indicated in the title, on the ever expanding phenomenon of social media. However, as becomes apparent through the book, such a narrowing distinction is not easily drawn.

The handbook consists of a short introduction and 11 chapters. It addresses various topics, from production and infrastructure, over learning and journalism to art and pop culture.

One of the editors, Jeremy Hunsinger, starts with an interesting piece on the “electronic Leviathan”, the implicit alliance between governments and corporations, giving the latter enormous power of surveillance and control of Internet behaviour, contrary to optimistic beliefs of the Internet as liberating. The chapter demonstrates the author’s profound knowledge of the Internet infrastructure, and the discussion of the many interfaces, visible and invisible, surrounding Internet users is refreshing. In the end, he calls for personal action and responsible behaviour in order to minimize the power of the electronic “Leviathan”.

Related, Andrew Herman’s chapter on production, consumption and labour discusses how social media economy is based on turning the audience into a commodity. Such dynamics are discussed in relation to well-known concepts of the Web 2.0 and “produsage”. It becomes clear that rather than producing, most users become the product; a critique similar to the Marxist inspired social media approach of Christian Fuchs (2014).

Angus Johnston's chapter on community and social media provides an overview of theoretical discussions on Internet communities. However, he only sparsely discusses the obvious consequences of social network sites like Facebook or Twitter being now the dominant social phenomenon online, rather than early online communities like games and chat rooms.

The same can be said of the chapters on art and performance and on pop culture, written by Toni Sant and Francesca Coppa, respectively. On the other hand, Alice Marwick succeeds in exactly that in her chapter on gender and sexuality. A concise and clear discussion of concepts of sex and gender is followed by data on the different communication and behaviour patterns of men and women, on the Internet in general and social media in particular.

Theresa Senft & Safiya Noble and Katie Ellis and Gerard Goggin discuss social media from the perspective of minorities. The first chapter addresses race, the other disability. Discussions of the consequences of race online have demonstrated that the early optimism of the postmodern Internet without race, gender and class has been proven wrong. Race still has consequences. It is evident that the chapter is written in an American context and might seem unfamiliar to for instance Europeans, to whom racial issues are less dominant in daily life and for instance the immigration debate is more focused on religious and economic issues. Ellis and Goggin deserve praise for addressing the topic of disability and social media. As they claim, this is rarely touched upon in daily discourses and even less in applied research. Social media definitely pose challenges as well as opportunities for disabled people and the overview of the phenomenon as well as the call for further action are highly relevant.

Some of the best chapters appear at the end of the book: Alexander Halavais' on teaching and learning, Zizi Papacharissi's on networked public and private spheres and Axel Bruns' on journalism in times of crisis. Papacharissi claims that discussions of democracy and the public sphere online ought to take its point of departure in the classic distinction between the private and the public. She also shows how social media create new complicated "supersurfaces", evaporating previous distinctions but also possibly providing new pockets and spaces for democratic action. Papacharissi as well as Bruns employ examples of social media demonstrating their power, namely the Arab Spring and recent natural disasters in Australia and New Zealand.

Although most chapters have a theoretical perspective, their strength is that they relate overall discussions to specific, empirical cases. However, many chapters focus mainly on early online experiences in MUDs, chat rooms and Usenet groups. As this is supposed to be a handbook on social media, it would have been desirable if more chapters had focused entirely on more recent social media phenomena.

One reason why the book appears to be a general discussion of online phenomena rather than a social media handbook might be that it seems to suffer from a lack of overview of the social media phenomenon. There is no introductory perspective on social

media and no definitions or discussions of how to distinguish social media from other media or from the Internet in general. Finally, the selection of topics seems to be based on the interests and competences of the contributors rather than on a systematic approach to social media. This is a pity, because many of the chapters are good and relevant, and not least because they address important aspects of social media. However, they would have benefitted from an editor's overview and contextualization. The introduction as it is now just mentions the themes of the chapters rather than placing them in a wider context.

The two present handbooks share a focus on substance rather than on applied methods. They focus on certain topics or aspects of Internet studies, thus sharing an ontological rather than an epistemological take on Internet research. Most of the time, they aptly combine theoretical approaches with discussions of specific cases, at the same time using and developing theories and portraying the ever-increasing importance of the Internet in a large variety of societal interactions.

Their initial focuses are of course different. As a general, authoritative handbook on Internet Studies, the Oxford volume can be recommended. It supplements the two previous handbooks mentioned at the beginning. As always, Oxford University Press strives for establishing the authoritative work within a field. On the other hand, the price might exclude especially undergraduate students from acquiring it. The social media handbook is, as mentioned, not a handbook in the normal sense. Neither is the focus narrowed to social media. The blurred distinction probably originates from a dominant confusion about the exact nature of social media. On the other hand, the different chapters provide overviews of previous and recent theoretical debates within the field of Internet study and Internet research. New readers can start here.

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