has done an excellent job in arguing for the convergence of approaches and perspectives. By offering a comprehensive review of theoretical frameworks and by providing practical recommendations for organizing and conducting research, the *Handbook of Media and Communication Research* is a valuable resource for researchers and students in the field of media and communication studies, as well as media practitioners.

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*The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies*, edited by William Dutton, professor at the Oxford Internet Institute, aims to cover the large area of Internet studies. Dutton organizes the handbook by answering questions pertaining to ‘who’, ‘why’ and ‘which implications for whom’, focusing on (a) technology, (b) the use of the Internet, and (c) policies concerning the Internet. With such an approach, it becomes clear that Internet studies is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing on theories and insights from sociology, psychology, information science, and even mathematics to understand Internet phenomena.

The handbook consists of five sections. In the first part (“Perspectives on the Internet and Web as Objects of Study”), the chapters on the web’s history (Elton and Carey), on web science (O’Hara), and on society on the web are essential to understanding the specifics of the Internet as an infrastructure and as a medium. These chapters define the Internet and the web using concepts from the social and information sciences. These chapters, in my opinion, should be required reading for all communication science scholars.

Part II on “Living in a Networked Society” taps into several topics, such as digital inequality, social network sites, online dating, and gaming. These chapters, covering topics commonly found in communication science journals, provide quick access to the main findings in these research fields. Ellison and boyd’s contribution on social networking sites is an updated version of their JCMC article from 2009. The chapter on “Cross-National Comparative Perspectives from the World Internet Project” (Cardoso, Liang, and Lapa) is a very interesting chapter, for, although the Internet is a globe-spanning infrastructure, this does not imply that the adoption and use of the Internet is similar in all countries. While cross-national comparative analysis remains fraught with difficulties and challenges, it would be a shame if researchers were to shy away
from the opportunity to further study Internet adoption. There is a great deal to be learned from a cross-cultural perspective.

Part III (“Creating and Working in a Global Network Economy”) focuses on business models, trust in transactions, education, and digital scholarship. Although it is a necessary part for a handbook on Internet studies, from a social sciences perspective on communication science it is of less relevance.

Part IV on “Communication, Power, and Influence in a Converging Media World” is probably most relevant for communication scholars and students. Comprising four chapters, it covers online news production (journalism) and consumption (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski), the use of the Internet in elections and campaigns (political communication; Lilleker and Vedel), and the Internet and democracy (Margetts). The first chapter (Rice and Fuller) on academic publications studying the Internet – although different from the others – is valuable because it outlines the dominant research themes. The findings of this analysis might have served to organize this handbook of Internet studies. Margetts’ chapter on the Internet and democracy would have perhaps been better suited for part V on “Governing and Regulating the Internet”. At the same time, part V is already quite large compared to the other sections. I would have liked to see more chapters on the information science perspective on the Internet. Given that most media already exist in digital form, communication science stands to greatly benefit from collaborations with information science. This handbook would have been a great opportunity to bundle these different but complementary approaches in a single volume.

Conclusion

Communication science is an interdisciplinary field. As such, a broadly composed reference as the Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies definitely serves its purpose as an initial and quick introduction to several approaches for studying the Internet. That said, the reader will quickly need to search for additional sources. Fortunately, all chapters provide extensive references, although there are very few references dated after 2010.

As with any handbook, choices have to be made with regard to what gets included and what does not as well as in terms of organization of the chapters. More attention to specific applications of information science and network approaches would have been welcomed. The topic of social network sites could have also benefitted from more focused attention. Apart from Ellison and boyd’s chapter offering a bird’s eye view of the topic, in-depth analysis on SNS is missing. The same can be said about the prominent role of search engines. Similarly, coverage of non-western countries is severely limited. Occasionally,
an author refers to South Korea or China. A handbook should have at least a single chapter on these topics.

Is this handbook relevant for communication scholars in Europe? This book is certainly suitable for students and communication science scholars looking for a comprehensive overview of the field. As such, the Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies is also a good introduction for sociologists, psychologists, economists, and legal experts.

Those who cannot find what they need in this Internet studies handbook might consider consulting the books by Easley and Kleinberg (2010) (whose book contains some network perspectives on the Internet) and Ackland (2013) (who focuses on several theoretical approaches on web social science methods and empirical applications).

References


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The emerging field of mediatization studies investigates the implications for societies and cultures that are becoming and being saturated by media. In essence, mediatization studies tackle the classical media sociological question on media and social change, albeit in a different way than medium theory or media effects studies. Specific media technologies are not central to explanations, nor are media conceived as an independent variable directly or indirectly influencing people, their attitudes, and behaviors. Mediatization studies have mainly been developed in Western Europe, particularly in Germany and the Scandinavian countries, although several leading British scholars, among them Nick Couldry and Sonia Livingstone, and American scholars such as Lynn Schofield Clark, have been part of the debates for many years now.