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The first digital games, such as *Spacewar!*, emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s, at the height of Cold War tensions, and military and academic experimentation with cybernetic control and artificial intelligence. While game studies researchers have long acknowledged the debt owed by video games to these developments, this is the first in-depth study of the legacy of cybernetics and military technology on contemporary video-game culture. The reason for this oversight, Crogan posits, is most video-game scholars’ avoidance of the debates over violence that dominate mainstream discussions of video games. By dismissing or ignoring this debate, he argues, games studies has too readily ‘throw [n] the baby out with the bathwater,’ overlooking their relationship with war and the military that lies ‘beyond the media effects debate’ (p. xiii). Crogan’s response is to unpack in intricate (and at times laborious) detail the synergistic relationship between the games industry and the ‘military-entertainment complex’; a link that he argues is both historical and ideological.

*Gameplay Mode* begins with an account of three key advancements in technological warfare that redefined computer ‘technoculture’. These are Norbert Weiner’s invention of cybernetics; the US military’s SAGE (Semi-Automated Ground Environment) project, which laid the groundwork for the American computing industry; and SIMNET, a program that marked the beginning of the military’s use of real-time networked games as training simulations. Crogan argues that these developments not only made the rise of digital gaming possible, but that they continue to pervade the ideology and logic of video games today. The second half of the book traces how this postwar military techno-scientific program has been ‘inherited’ by video-game culture, from flight-simulation games to ‘Massively Multiplayer’ worlds. One chapter examines the expression of the cybernetic desire for control in first-person shooter games; another turns to mods and ‘serious games’ that critique gaming’s emphasis on war and conflict (such as ‘Painstation’, which turns *Pong* into a torture device by delivering electric shocks to players).

Crogan’s book is exceptionally well researched, and at times pushes the boundaries of games studies, but it is let down by some stylistic and methodological issues. The first is its vapid writing style, which despite cogently handling its historical and theoretical concerns, quickly becomes onerous and occasionally fails to clearly articulate Crogan’s argument. More problematic, though, is his selective use of case studies: as one would expect, most of the games discussed are first- and third-person shooters and war simulators. Despite Crogan’s attempt to head off this criticism early on (p. xxvi), he spends much of the book juggling close analysis of specific examples while maintaining that his argument can be extrapolated to the games industry as a whole (though he discusses decidedly few non-military-themed examples). In the process, the book struggles to conceal the flaws in its methodology by making totalising claims about digital gaming culture that will appeal to a select few games researchers, but is likely to hinder its intervention in debates around video games and digital culture more broadly.

– Dale Leorke, *Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne*


Peter Decherney’s *Hollywood's Copyright Wars* explores the history of the copyright debate in the United States, from Thomas Edison’s attempts to extend existing
Decherney argues that technical copy protection of digital media is not a new concept, but in the tradition of locking a diary, encrypting military communications and chaining books to the wall in an Oxford library (p. 203).

Landmark court cases and Acts are covered in depth, including the 1903 decision to outlaw duping – the unauthorised copying and distribution of a rival’s film (pp. 30–32), Charlie Chaplin’s use of the legal system to establish ownership of the Tramp character (pp. 67–77), and the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act (p. 202).

The 1998 Act made it illegal to circumvent ‘locks’ on digital media and introduced ‘safe harbour’ provisions to protect web hosts and service providers whose users breached copyright law (p. 202). The Act, Decherney argues, allowed Apple to flourish and dominate the market through its iPod media player and iTunes store.

Community standards in relation to copyright in his view are not consistent. He cites filmmaker Chris Hegedus, who told a conference audience in 2004 that no one thought of applying for copyright permission when singer Donovan sang a whole song for Bob Dylan in a 1967 film but that by 2004 documentary filmmakers automatically applied for copyright to use even a few bars of a song in a film (p. 197).

Decherney, the director of the Cinema Studies program at the University of Pennsylvania, was one of a group of media educators who applied successfully in 2006 to the Librarian of Congress for an exemption to the 1998 Act to allow the use of high-quality digital film clips for media education, an exemption extended in 2009 to cover media studies students, documentary filmmakers and others.

Of particular note is Decherney’s explanation of the purpose of US copyright law. He argues that the US Constitution grants monopoly rights to authors, not creators, that the definition of ‘author’ has changed over time, and that copyright exists in the United States to ‘promote the progress of science’, and protecting authors and creators is only a by-product: ‘The ultimate goal of copyright is always to enrich society by encouraging the creation of art and ideas, so they can be consumed and built upon.’ (p. 4)

For anyone wanting to gain a deeper understanding of the application of copyright law, particularly in relation to fair use provisions and the way Hollywood studios have reacted in the past to new technology and competition, Decherney’s comprehensive analysis, with its clear language and thorough research, would be an excellent choice.

– Janet M. Harkin, Deakin University, Associate Lecturer Journalism, Faculty of Arts and Education.


This is a welcome contribution to the field of Indigenous media representations because it brings the scholarship up to date with case studies that include the Intervention, the Apology and the ‘Aurukun rape case’. Through critical discourse analysis (CDA), the study yields insightful analysis of hard-news text. The methodology is clearly explicated, and as such is an excellent teaching tool. However, the authors’ claims – while probably accurate – are too broad for the analysis, and in some respects their critique of hard news is off the mark.

The authors, who conduct their analysis through the ‘lens of colonisation’, argue that