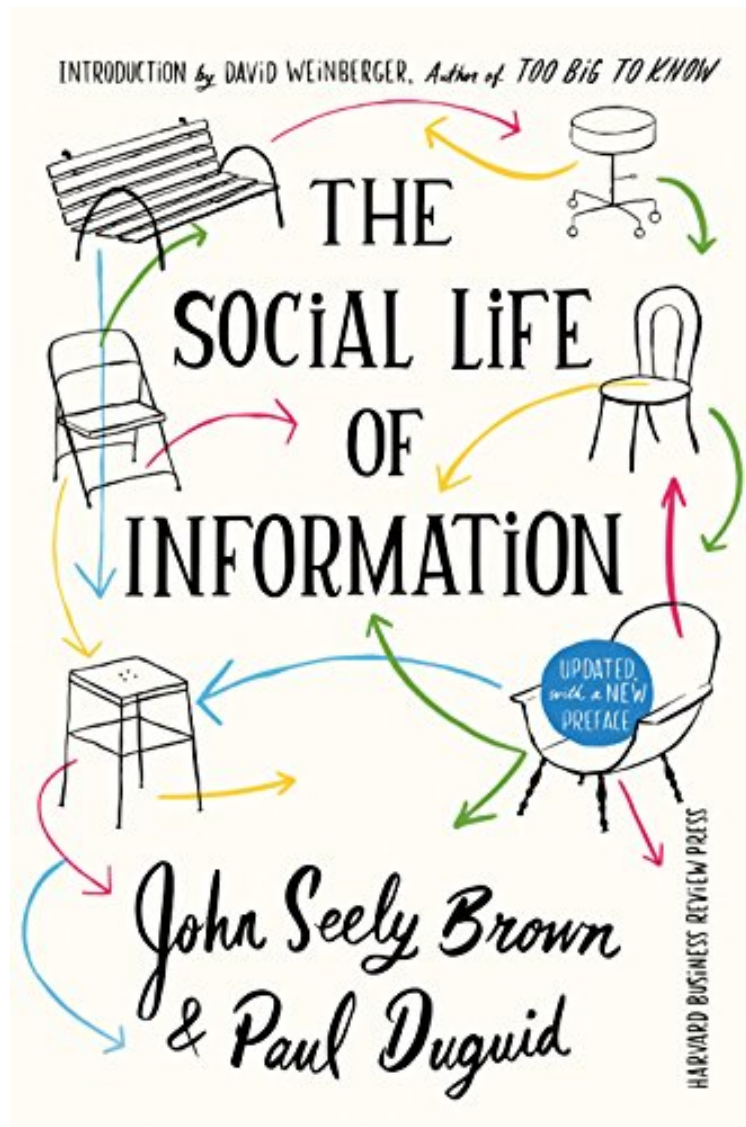


## The Social Life of Information: Updated, with a New Preface

John Seely Brown, Paul Duguid  
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**John Seely Brown, Paul Duguid : The Social Life of Information: Updated, with a New Preface** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Social Life of Information: Updated, with a New Preface:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerRead this book to understand the beginning of the flux between information theory, real-world practice and personal computing.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. How and why 'the ability of information and its technologies [continue] to change the social world for the better'By Robert MorrisThis is an updated edition of a book first published in 2000. David

Weisberger provides an Introduction to the New Edition. As co-authors John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid observe in their New Preface, "As we have tried to suggest in this brief attempt to set this book in a contemporary context, one thing that remains underanalyzed in the world of technological change is the 'social'; that we have tried to investigate. We have sought to indicate that it is more than an outgrowth of or reducible to individualism. While there is a great deal of talk of the social, what people are talking about often remains unclear." One of their objectives in this new edition is to provide greater clarity of issues that have emerged in recent years. Social groups now play a much more important role in the context of information itself. Brown and Duguid "certainly do not pretend that this fifteen-year old book pretend that their updated edition 'will in any way provide that understanding, but we hope it might still signal the need to develop it.'" There is indeed work yet to be done. With uncommon precision as well as eloquence, they urge their reader to consider quite carefully what information is, how it can be exchanged, and why the nature and extent of that exchange are among the defining characteristics of any society. They observe, "Technology design often takes aim at the surface of life. There it undoubtedly scores lots of worthwhile hits. But such successes can make designers blind to the difficulty of more serious challenges--primarily the resourcefulness that helps embed certain ways of doing things deep in our lives." This is precisely what James O'Toole has in mind when, in *Leading Change*, he refers to what he calls "the ideology of comfort and the tyranny of custom." Almost 50 years ago in *Future Shock* (1930), Alvin Toffler observes, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." I was reminded of that as I began to read Chapter Eight, "Re-Education." Brown and Duguid really nail it when commenting on the ability of a group to construct their education collectively--with collaborative learning--rather than with traditional academic approach of command and control. Consider these comments: "The ability of the group to construct their education constructively recalls the way in which groups form and develop around documents [and shared, real-world experiences]. Together, members construct and negotiate a shared meaning, bringing the group along collectively rather than individually. In the process, they become what the literary critic Stanley Fish calls a 'community of interpretation' working toward a shared understanding of the matter under discussion." Frankly, I cannot recall a prior time when the global community was more volatile, more uncertain, more complex, and more ambiguous than it is today. That said, I agree with John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid that "one thing that does endure, despite various setbacks, is a remarkable optimism about the ability of information and its related technologies to change the social world for the better." Change remains the only constant and our ability to understand its nature and extent is imperative. They do not pretend that their updated edition "will in any way provide that understanding, but we hope it might still signal the need to develop it." In this context, I am again reminded of an incident that occurred decades ago when one of Albert Einstein's faculty colleagues at Princeton gently chided him because he always asked the same questions on his final examinations. "Quite true. Guilty as charged. Each year the answers are different." 0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The style is too much like a specialized journal article. By Kristine Fisher. *The Social Life of Information* by John Seely Brown is a free NetGalley ebook that I read in early January. In its new 2017 edition, this book is written in declarative, descriptive stats, as well as scientific-minded examples and hypotheticals. However, the style is too much like a specialized journal article, since the concepts aren't unpacked completely enough for a layman to understand.

"Should be read by anyone interested in understanding the future." The *Times Literary Supplement* raved about the original edition of *The Social Life of Information*. "We're now living in that future, and one of the seminal books of the Internet Age is more relevant than ever. The future was a place where technology was supposed to empower individuals and obliterate social organizations. Pundits predicted that information technology would spell the end of almost everything--from mass media to bureaucracies, universities, politics, and governments. Clearly, we are not living in that future. *The Social Life of Information* explains why. John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid show us how to look beyond mere information to the social context that creates and gives meaning to it. Arguing elegantly for the important role that human sociability plays, even--perhaps especially--in the digital world, *The Social Life of Information* gives us an optimistic look beyond the simplicities of information and individuals. It shows how a better understanding of the contribution that communities, organizations, and institutions make to learning, working, and innovating can lead to the richest possible use of technology in our work and everyday lives. With a new introduction by David Weinberger and reflections by the authors on developments since the book's first publication, this new edition is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the human place in a digital world.

Praise for *The Social Life of Information*: "A thoughtful and challenging read that belongs on the bookshelf of anyone trying to invent or make sense of the new world of information." "Essential Reading for Modern Managers." *Businessweek*. "An intellectual gem." *Publishers' Weekly*. "This deserves to be one of the best-read books of the internet age." *The Financial Times*. "The *Social Life of Information* will help technologists keep an eye on the bigger picture and avoid the tunnel vision that can lead promising companies down blind alleys." Eric Schmidt. About the Author: John Seely Brown (JSB) was the Chief Scientist of Xerox

Corporation, as well as the director of the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center. He is currently a visiting scholar and adviser to the provost at the University of Southern California and the Independent Co-Chairman for Deloitte's Center for the Edge. His personal research interests include new approaches to learning, digital youth culture, digital media, and the application of technology to accelerate deep learning within and across organizational boundaries. Paul Duguid is an adjunct full professor in the School of Information at the University of California, Berkeley. He was formerly Professorial Research Fellow at Queen Mary, University of London. Earlier, he was affiliated with the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center and the Institute for Research on Learning. Duguid has sought to investigate problems that arise from reducing the complexities and richness of human insight and communication to the mere appropriation and exchange of information.