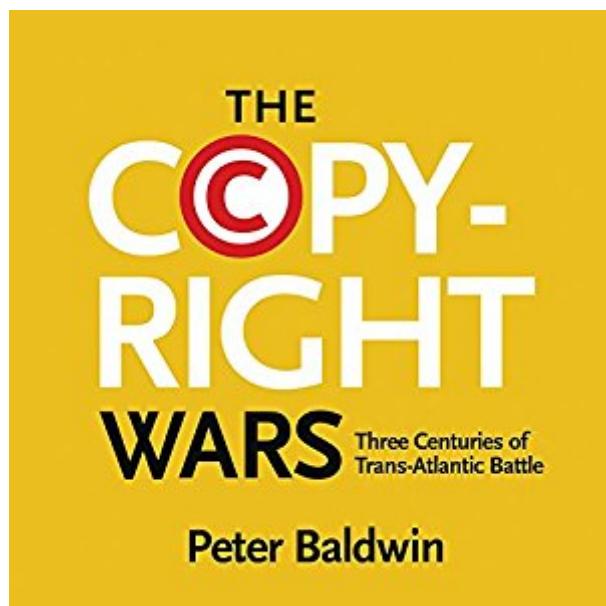


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The Copyright Wars: Three Centuries Of Trans-Atlantic Battle



Synopsis

Today's copyright wars can seem unprecedented. Sparked by the digital revolution that has made copyright - and its violation - a part of everyday life, fights over intellectual property have pitted creators, Hollywood, and governments against consumers, pirates, Silicon Valley, and open-access advocates. But while the digital generation can be forgiven for thinking the dispute between, for example, the publishing industry and Google is completely new, the copyright wars in fact stretch back three centuries - and their history is essential to understanding today's battles. The Copyright Wars - the first major trans-Atlantic history of copyright from its origins to today - tells this important story. Peter Baldwin explains why the copyright wars have always been driven by a fundamental tension. Should copyright assure authors and rights holders lasting claims, much like conventional property rights, as in Continental Europe? Or should copyright be primarily concerned with giving consumers cheap and easy access to a shared culture, as in Britain and America? The Copyright Wars describes how the Continental approach triumphed, dramatically increasing the claims of rights holders. The book also tells the widely forgotten story of how America went from being a leading copyright opponent and pirate in the 18th and 19th centuries to becoming the world's intellectual property policeman in the late 20th. As it became a net cultural exporter and its content industries saw the advantage of the Continental ideology of strong authors' rights, the United States reversed position on copyright, weakening its commitment to the ideal of universal enlightenment - a history that reveals that today's open-access advocates are heirs of a venerable American tradition. Compelling and wide-ranging, The Copyright Wars is indispensable for understanding a crucial economic, cultural, and political conflict that has reignited in our own time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Great book. Informative, interesting, and despite the weighty topic, the author keeps the story moving. I learned a lot.

Good summary about the creation of current views of intellectual property, the author gives lots of examples that are entertaining

Very good book for begginers

Unlike most non-legal text on copyright, this one is long on facts and historic context while leaving the fist pounding and pontification to others. I checked this book out of the library after seeing it on the "new arrivals" shelf. Having read it, wishing I could hi-light and annotate its pages with notes, I am now committed to buying it. The author is truly immersed in his subject historically, and the topical nuances of the present legal debates are given their place in history. The evolution of copyright is far more complex in England, European and America than it would appear from the bloggy diatribes dancing across the web today. In European, the question of the honor of the author and his/her ability to defend it was a major factor in determining the laws -- something that has never been an issue in America with its crass love of business for business sake. Likewise the crown-based publishers guild is a player in Europe. This book should be read by far more than professionals in IP, it should be read by everyone interested in civilization post-Renaissance. From Dickens to Disney, the last three centuries in particular could not have unfolded as they have without the struggles documented in the book. The latter parts of the book covers the struggle of computer software and digital rights as well. The internet-age seems to foster shallow, self-righteous, cherry-picked glossings from history, this book, on the other hand, is for those who would like a little more cake with their sprinkles and frosting.

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