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Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet and *The Snowden Files*

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The following review by Judy Anderson covers two books.

Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet

Julian Assange with Jacob Appelbaum, Andy Moller-Magun, and Jérémie Zimmermann. New York: OR Books, 2012. 186 pp. $16

The Snowden Files

Luke Harding. New York: Vintage Books, 2014. 346 pp. $14.95

The continuing saga of WikiLeaks and the fate of Edward Snowden remain a story of conflicting viewpoints. Those interested in exploring the reasoning behind such hacking and exposure will find that *Cypherpunks* supplies the background and philosophy of the techies who feel strongly that the Internet must remain a free zone for privacy in communication, economic activity, and movement/travel. *The Snowden Files* shows another, more reserved, approach but with the same end — to alert people to the government's invasion of their personal privacy that, legally, it is only permitted access after proper procedures are followed against specific individuals. Each work walks the reader through the thought processes of the whistleblowers; Harding's book adds the reporter's talent for putting the reader into the daily life of Snowden through descriptions of places and meetings that occurred as Snowden sought trustworthy people and secure locations.

Cypherpunks is a dialog among some well-known cypherpunks, i.e., persons who "advocate for the use of cryptography and similar methods … to achieve political and social change," explaining their experiences and personal views on Internet management and control of its data. Each sees using cryptography as the ultimate non-violent means for direct action; a way of providing privacy for the general public and forcing transparency in government. The conversation is held among Julian Assange (editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks), Jacob Appelbaum (founder of Noisebridge–San Francisco and researcher for the TOR project), Andy Moller-Maguhn (Chaos Computer Club and European Director of ICAAN), and Jérémie Zimmerman (cofounder of La Quadrature du Net). Because they operate within different types of government and in different countries, their discussions are lively and show there are many ways to approach problem solving. Their approaches to the topics covered — surveillance, censorship, the military, economics, politics, and privacy — demonstrate their ability to examine many sides of a problem and to share knowledge to find solutions to benefit individuals, not corporate or government entities.

In the past, data collection and storage was cost prohibitive; only the more affluent countries could afford to collect and store data, with access limited to government workers and academics. It was a closed community that posed little threat to personal freedom. Opening the Internet to the public and having the cost of hardware decrease dramatically has changed that. Companies and governments, even in the poorer nations world-wide, find storing and mining huge amounts of data the new way of doing business. Tracking personal information, movements, and preferences has become the new reality. That reality is open to potential abuse, but also contains the possibility for advancing individual freedom. That freedom gained is in jeopardy because it threatens those in power. For Assange and his colleagues, the first challenge discussed is counteracting the self-censorship that is put in place through fear of surveillance, and strengthening citizens' awareness of the importance of privacy for personal freedom. Control of personal data should be in the hands of the person, not the corporation or government. The second challenge is to prevent abuse of power by opening up the transactions and data produced by governments to public scrutiny.

Although Assange and his colleagues tend to be viewed as zealots for their cause, this is not a fear-mongering work. The participants ground each other in reality. They discuss, for example, how de-indexing web pages (404 page not found) that do not conform to a particular viewpoint revises history, and have concrete examples of this process. They chat about the importance of surveillance through due process where warrants for a particular purpose are needed to track individuals, but warn against total surveillance and a centralized cloud because, although the concepts are economical, the price is allocation of power and the potential for abuse of that power. Another interesting conversation revolves around monitoring financial transactions and how intricately economics, communications, and the freedom to travel are interwoven. Finding balance for retaining personal freedom in an environment that threatens such freedom is a constant thread in their discussions.

The cypherpunks promote a free, unfettered Internet in which persons control their personal data. They suggest that a few in their community have the skills to operate within the monitored Internet. They ask for

- Minimal policy regulation, believing that free flow of information will provide the means to track those using the Internet for unlawful pursuits,
- Citizens to become politically active and fight for legislation that protects personal privacy, and
- The cyber community intellects to create and provide encryption software that is simple enough for any user to understand, inexpensive enough to install on devices, and powerful enough in the encryption technology to allow the user to control access to personal data, communications, and economic transactions.

They also state that most people will not have the skills or inclination to fully protect themselves and predict that most will allow their freedom to erode in a bureaucratic nightmare. Assange suggests that a few cypherpunks will become the elite "rats" who work apart and continue to retain their personal freedom through cypher skills. The work ends on this elitist, and perhaps accurate, note that detracts from the positive call to action seen in earlier chapters.

Harding, correspondent for *The Guardian*, which courageously published information shared by Edward Snowden, offers insight into both Snowden's personal journey, and the consequences that occurred to try to prevent his exposing information found in NSA files. Unlike the more showy posture taken by Assange, Snowden is shown as hesitant and thoughtful. His work in the CIA and NSA gave him top priority clearance; his training in the CIA and NSA gave him skills to encrypt at a very high level. He is described as using those skills to ensure that only information that does not endanger lives is released. The work, possibly because *The Guardian* is a British news organization with offices in New York City, reveals the strong ties and data sharing between the British GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters), one of their intelligence agencies, and the United States NSA (National Security Agency), an agency specializing in cryptography.

Motivation for Snowden was to make citizens of both countries aware of the violation of law in data collection on all citizens. Film-maker Laura Poitras and columnist Glenn Greenwald of *The Guardian* saw the importance for making this information public and the potential for a great story. The data collection was especially egregious in Britain, which has specific laws against government spying on its citizens. The laws were enacted after World War II in response to Nazi Germany's surveillance of its populous. The United States Constitution is less specific but also states a required due process under the fourth amendment before data can be collected against a U.S. citizen. Snowden's reasoning, as interpreted by his advocates and recorded by Harding, was to expose government actions, being careful not to endanger the lives of persons working undercover for the government.

Harding's work chronicles the reasoning and assistance given by Poitras and *The Guardian* reporters and editors for making public selected bits of the information Snowden took from NSA files. The book follows Snowden's history in the detailed style of a reporter, giving, not just the facts, but the environment in which events occurred. It begins with Snowden's early career and his reasons for contacting Greenwald when he had decided to expose the NSA's data collection activities. The saga continues with his moving to Hong Kong where he felt the atmosphere supported free speech, based on his brief experience in China. It traces interactions between government officials, Snowden, and *The Guardian* from initial contact to his asylum in Russia and subsequent unsuccessful attempts to safely leave that country.

Harding contrasts Julian Assange with Snowden, stating that the approaches reflected different personalities of the two. Assange enjoyed the limelight while Snowden was uncomfortable with the publicity. They each made information public to indicate the disregard for personal privacy and the dangers that entails.

Assange advanced his cause with a flair that would showcase his genius. Snowden felt compelled to act because it was necessary for people to know about the government's clandestine activities collecting and storing data without due process, putting personal privacy in jeopardy. He felt uncomfortable in the limelight. Though their styles were different, they shared a common interest in protecting peoples' privacy.

Throughout the work, Harding gives the reader insight into a person who believes strongly in his efforts to protect people against an increasingly invasive government and the thoughtful, skillful planning he used to achieve those goals. The reader is also shown the wider net of persons who agreed to help, and those who tried to stop this modern day Thomas Paine.

For those who wish to continue researching in this area of study, both works include specific names of people, laws, and agencies that are a part of the saga. *Cypherpunks* has extensive endnotes; *Snowden Files* has ample indexing. Those interested in gaining insight into how intellectual freedom is viewed by those using Internet hacking as a means to counteract attacks on personal privacy will find these works well thought out and documented. They may be used to promote discussion on the topics of privacy vs. safety, and the role of government in our online world. Recommended for both academic and public libraries.—*Judy Anderson*

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Not in My Library!: "Berman's Bag" Columns from The Unabashed Librarian, 2000–2013

Sanford Berman. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2013. 197 pp. $35

As the subtitle suggests, this book is a republication of Sanford Berman's articles in *The Unabashed Librarian*. The foreword is by Maurice J. Freedman, former President of the American Library Association (ALA), who describes his long professional association with Berman. Freedman points out that Berman's main focus has been on cataloging practices at the Library of Congress (LC), but Berman's writings cover a wide range of other topics relating to information ethics, including whistle-blowing, library censorship, rights for library workers to speak out (which led to the title of this book), ALA's Banned Books Week, library censorship in Cuba, intellectual freedom rights of poor people, and so forth.

The rhetoric of the library profession is very strong regarding intellectual freedom, anti-censorship, giving access to all points of view during controversies, etc. Such rhetoric culminates in the expansive term, "free flow of information." In an age of a so-called "information explosion," factors such as