

This is an important book, and for me it is one of the must-be-read texts in the social studies of science and technology. For those of us who want to break out of the state of (to use Langdon Winner's term²) "technological somnambulism", *Inventing Accuracy* provides a rich source of empirical detail and theoretical insight to be mined and critically reflected upon. It is a darned good read to boot!

REFERENCES

1. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajeman (eds), *The Social Shaping of Technology*, Open University Press, 1985.
2. Langdon Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*, The University of Chicago Press, 1986.

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Telecommunications Law — Australian Perspective edited by Mark Armstrong (Media Arm, Melbourne, 1990), pp. xxviii + 435, \$78.00, ISBN 0-731-6-9555-0.

It was H.G. Wells who once remarked that developments in telecommunications represent the greatest single achievement of mankind in 50 centuries. Today telecommunications provides the essential infrastructure for communication and wealth generation in a modern state. The commodity that it conveys is information — the raw material of the modern information economy. More than a century ago in Australia the regulation of 'post and telegraphic services' began. Supported by the constitution this legislation saw Australia through to the point at which information technology revolutionised the capability of the network and when other countries in the international community were embarking on a privatisation programme for network and services provision.

This text contains 22 contributions examining the impact of the changes introduced by the 1989 Act. The preface indicates that the aim is not simply to catalogue the changes but to provide a range of views on the legal developments from which the reader can gain a perspective on what has taken place. Accordingly we have both a descriptive and a discursive text that encompasses the major changes in Australian telecommunication regulation through a series of essays on specific topics. Given the complexity of orchestrating such a large number of contributors, the editor notes that contributions are not written to exactly the same date. However in most cases material was current to late 1989 or early 1990. So how can the non-expert get into this book and what would his/her purpose be? I think at one level the book does provide good specific coverage of the legislative changes that have taken place but it also purports to go beyond that, explaining the consequences of these changes in economic and social policy terms. The editor also remarks that the book can be used as a ready reference where the reader requires information on a specific point.

The preface indicates that the chapters are arranged thematically but the theme involved that determines this is not explained. Broadly speaking, however, the first half of the contributions concern the background and context to the reforms

followed by specific analysis of some of the key elements of it. There are useful introductory pieces then on the context of the reformed laws, drafting issues and the origins of the Act. This is followed by sections looking at the formation of private networks and network services, their regulation and that of the associated equipment and cabling markets. There are also three 'stand alone' pieces examining joint venturing in telecoms, international regulation and electronic data interchange.

The second half of the contributions is very much dominated by the issue of competition law and its impact on the structure and functioning of the industry and the market place. The analysis is prefaced by background information on how the market was originally controlled, prior to the arrival of the independent regulator AUSTEL. Subsequent sections then deal with the role of competition law in telecommunications, the Trade Practices Act exemptions for anti-competitive conduct, pricing regulation and rules governing the exclusion of competitive carriers from the market. This is a very interesting section with the contributor, Warren Pengilly, lamenting the slow pace of change. In his view the chief problem is the failure to take a bold decision on the most fundamental aspect of telecommunications, namely to abolish the telecom carrier monopoly. He argues that in a rapidly developing industry such as telecommunications "we cannot afford not to have a competitor or at the least the credible threat of a competitor to telecom" (p.293). He concludes that AUSTEL will be a regulation oriented entity and that much of the bureaucracy, court cases, conflicts and pressures could be avoided if the telecom monopoly were abolished "and AUSTEL primarily looked at the price of access to a competitive carrier and the rural subsidy which might be payable by such a carrier" (p.306). It is a pity that this and one or two other sections were not given more primacy within the text, as the ideas expressed in the latter did tend to shape discussion elsewhere. The remaining sections again dealt with specific topics such as the impact of telecom reorganisation on other government business enterprises, the role of the Ombudsman in dealing with consumer complaints and three separate essays examining the case for and against the policy of providing a universal telephone service throughout Australia.

To sum up, this book gives life to the debate that continues apace regarding development of telecommunication services in Australia. Contributors appear informed and appropriately opinionated offering an overview of where developments have reached, what problems lie ahead and what further developments might be required in the future as a result of technological advance, international activity and the inexorable pressure to extend the reforms that are clearly underway but not yet complete.

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Growth Policy in the Age of High Technology edited by *Jurgen Schmandt and Robert Wilson*. (Unwin Hyman, Boston, 1990) pp. xx + 470, \$145.00, ISBN 0-04-445621-2.

This is an important book compiled at a time of major structural change. It endeavours to convey both the flavours of technological change and the spatial