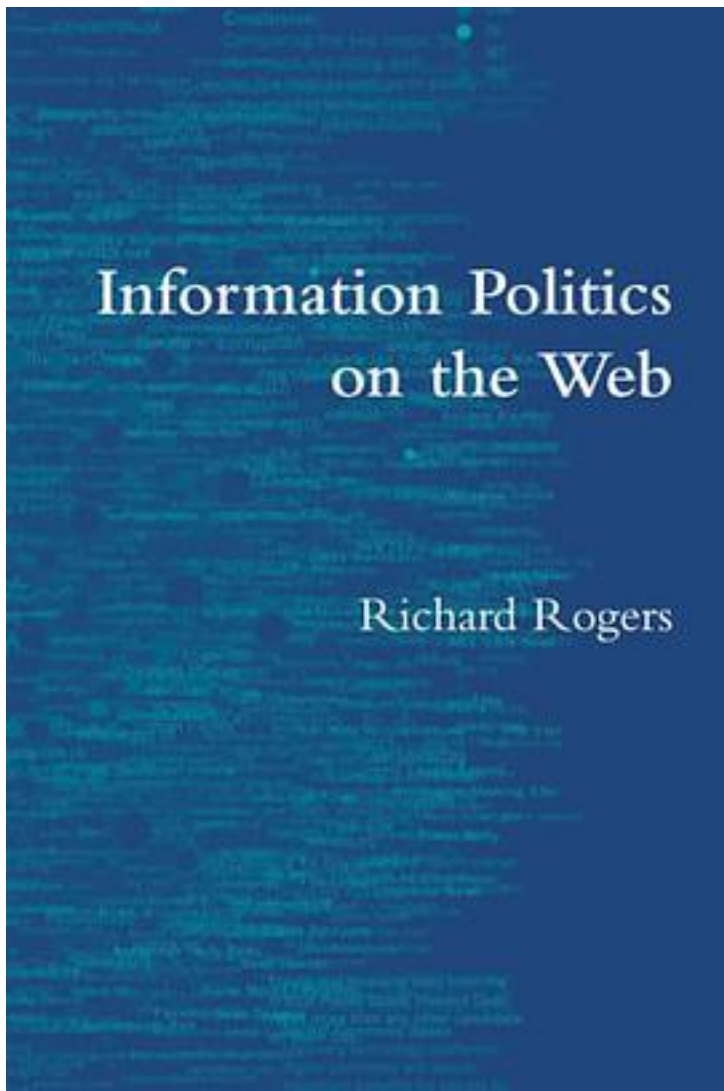


Information Politics on the Web



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著者:Rogers, Richard

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Does the information on the Web offer many alternative accounts of reality, or does it subtly align with an official version? In *Information Politics on the Web*, Richard Rogers identifies the cultures, techniques, and devices that rank and recommend information on the Web, analyzing not only the political content of Web sites but the politics built into the Web's infrastructure. Addressing the larger question of what the Web is for, Rogers argues that the Web is still the best arena for unsettling the official and challenging the familiar. Rogers describes the politics at work on the Web as either back-end -- the politics of search engine technology -- or front-end -- the diversity, inclusivity, and relative prominence of sites publicly accessible on the Web. To analyze this, he developed four "political instruments," or software tools that gather information about the Web by capturing dynamic linking practices, attention cycles for issues, and changing political party commitments. On the basis of his findings on how information politics works, Rogers argues that the Web should be, and can be, a "collision space" for official and unofficial accounts of reality. (One chapter, "The Viagra Files" offers an entertaining analysis of official and unofficial claims for the health benefits of Viagra.) The distinctiveness of the Web as a medium lies partly in the peculiar practices that grant different statuses to information sources. The tools developed by Rogers capture these practices and contribute to the development of a new information politics that takes into account and draws from the competition between the official, the non-governmental, and the underground.

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目录:

[Information Politics on the Web_ 下载链接1](#)

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