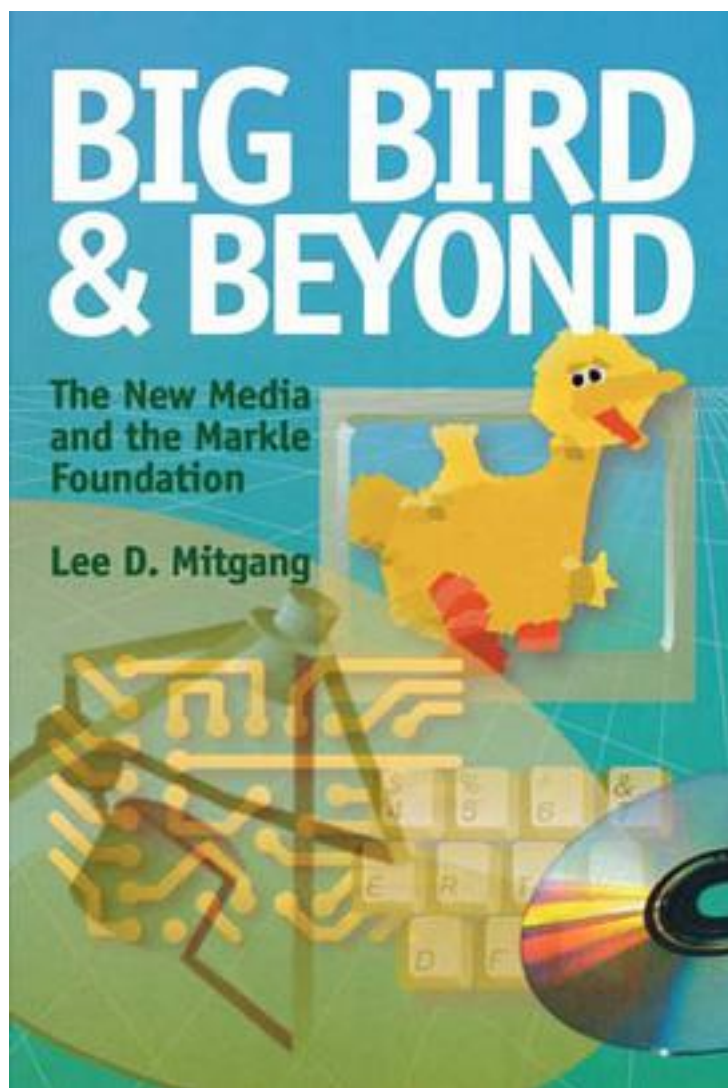


Big Bird and Beyond



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出版者:Fordham Univ Pr

出版时间:2000-1

装帧:HRD

isbn:9780823220403

It began more than 30 years ago with a question at a dinner party at Joan Ganz Cooney's Manhattan apartment: Could the power of television be used to teach millions of pre-school children the basics of literacy? That question from Lloyd Morrisett, a young foundation executive, soon led to the launching of the most popular children's program in the world, Sesame Street, defying the odds in an industry that had long placed faith in selling soap rather than serving the educational needs of its audiences. For Morrisett, the birth of Sesame Street was the beginning of an often-lonely, sometimes triumphant and occasionally futile struggle to make quality and equity count in the communications revolution that has so dramatically altered every aspect of life over the last half-century: from newspapers, radio, film and television to computers and the internet. Big Bird and Beyond reveals the pivotal role Morrisett played since 1969, as president of The John & Mary R. Markle Foundation and as chairman of the Children's Television Workshop, in launching Peggy Charren's Action for Children's Television, rescuing the Columbia Journalism Review and the Fund for Investigative Journalism from bankruptcy, establishing the National News Council in Defiance of the nation's most powerful newspaper, and spurring Cable News Network to provide more-issue oriented presidential election coverage. It describes how Markle almost single-handedly promoted the idea of using computers and the Internet to enrich the lives of the elderly, and most recently, how electronic mail might connect citizens more effectively to government and other institutions affecting their lives. For three decades, then, Morrisett became the Ralph Nader of the communications field, a tireless civic advocate who spent millions and tapped the talents of some of the best minds in America in an idealistic battle for the educational, cultural and political potential of both old and newer media.

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