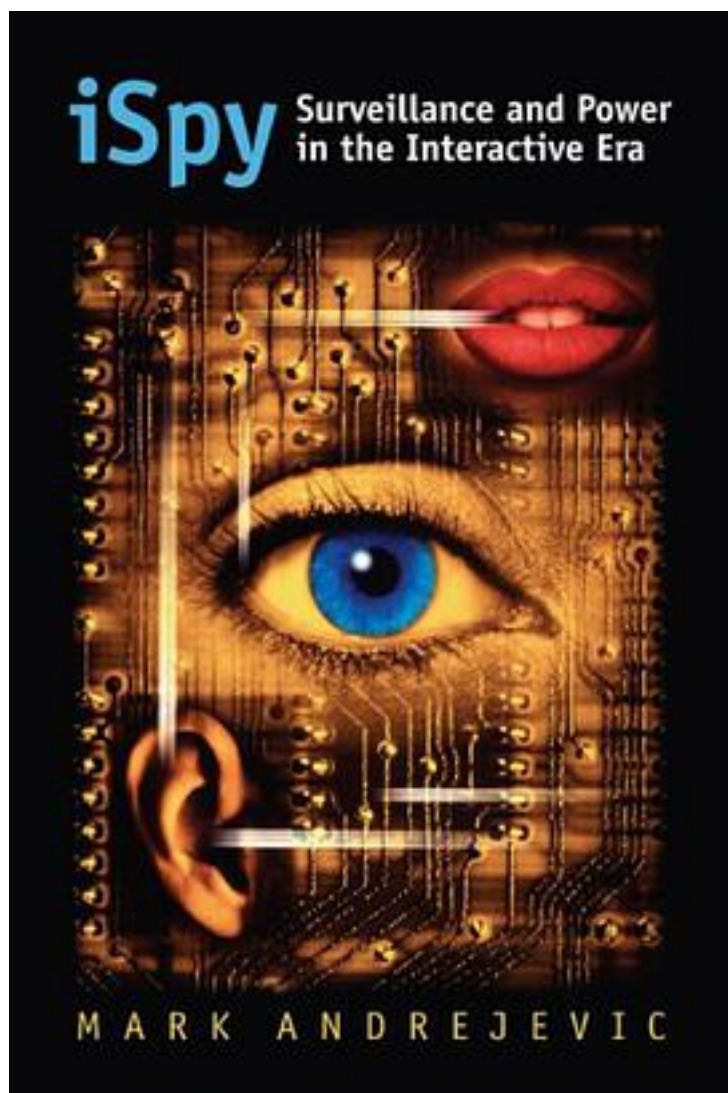


ISpy



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Whether you're purchasing groceries with your Safeway "club card" or casting a vote on American Idol, that data is being collected. From Amazon to iTunes, cell phones to GPS devices, Google to TiVo--all of these products and services give us an expansive sense of choice, access, and participation. But, in an era now marked by large-scale NSA operations that secretly monitor our email exchanges and internet surfing, Mark Andrejevic shows how these new technologies are increasingly employed as modes of surveillance and control. Many contend that our proliferating interactive media empower individuals and democratize society. But, Andrejevic asks, at what cost? In iSpy, he reveals that these and other highly touted benefits are accompanied by hidden risks and potential threats that tend to be ignored by mainstream society. His book offers the first sustained critique of a concept that has been a talking point for twenty years, an up-to-the-minute survey of interactivity across multiple media platforms. It debunks the false promises of the digital revolution still touted by the popular media while seeking to rehabilitate, rather than simply write off, the potentially democratic uses of interactive media. Andrejevic opens up the world of digital rights management and the data trail each of us leaves--data about our locations, preferences, or life events that are already put to use in various economic, political, and social contexts. He notes that, while citizens are becoming increasingly transparent to private and public monitoring agencies, they themselves are unable to access the information gathered about them--or know whether it's even correct. (The watchmen, it seems, don't want to be watched.) He also considers the appropriation of consumer marketing for political campaigns in targeting voters, and also examines the implications of the Internet for the so-called War on Terror. In iSpy, Andrejevic poses real challenges for our digital future. Amazingly detailed, compellingly readable, it warns that we need to temper our enthusiasm for these technologies with a better understanding of the threats they pose--to be able to distinguish between interactivity as centralized control and as collaborative participation.

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