



## Book Review:

### **Reading Time:**

3 minutes

### **Reader Benefit:**

- ◆ Learn about what the information revolution means to you;
- ◆ Insights about how you can make use of information;
- ◆ Buy the book to discover how information works for your well-being.

Title: **The Social Life of Information**

Author: John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid

Publisher: Harvard Business School Press

Pages: 320 pp, includes Notes, Bibliography and Index

Reviewer's Rating: ☺☺☺☺☺

### Rating Legend:

*Inspiring* ☺☺☺☺☺ *Excellent* ☺☺☺☺ *Good* ☺☺☺ *Average* ☺☺ *OK* ☺

### *Website Summary:*

## **Consider the Context of Information**

Conventional wisdom about the information revolution tends to proclaim the end of the old-world economy. Fortunately for us, such overly-simplified views are not the all-pervasive mainstream mindset. What follows is the expose that IT by itself, will not work unless such new technologies empower and enhance the relationships of the community and the various institutions within the social ecosystem.

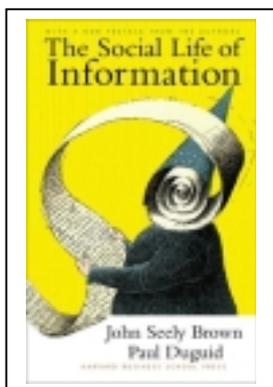
### *Synopsis:*

## **Consider the Context of Information**

Conventional wisdom about the information revolution tends to proclaim the end of the old-world economy. Fortunately for us, such overly-simplified views are not the all-pervasive mainstream mindset.

This book is a welcome change, and has a counter-argument for the bias towards all things new. And the premise is truly simple yet profound. The authors put information in its right place — as a servant of mankind, and not merely to displace the social life of the human being — but to enhance it.

Articulated with plain good sense, the rich material helps you to build your own understanding of where the electronic world of bits and bytes is going.





## Consider the Context of Information

*Book Review by Leon A. Enriquez*

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“Living in the information age can occasionally feel like being driven by someone with tunnel vision,” state authors John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid in the book’s Introduction. “We hope that in the course of this book we can steer a path between blindness and bruises.”

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Articulated with plain good sense, the rich material helps you to build your own understanding of where the electronic world of bits and bytes is going. And the authors stress the need to differentiate the information bits from the physical atoms that preside over the transformation. There are lessons to be learnt as we experience changes brought about by the e-world encounters of the information age.

Sandwiched between the main eight chapters are the *Introduction* and *Afterthought* pages. Designed in a sequential manner, the chapters are organised around themes such as Limits to Information; Agents and Angels; Home Alone; Practice Makes Process; Learning – in Theory and in Practice; Innovating Organisation, Husbanding Knowledge; Reading the Background; and Re-education.

With convincing clarity, these scholarly gentlemen make their case for *The Social Life of Information* in a direct way that will not fail to grab the reader’s attention, no matter what your background may be. And the easy-to-read style is a refreshing value-add considering the at times suffocating information glut that you can feel sinking into in today’s fast pace of life.

The tact and discussion is simultaneously insightful and delightful, which makes the reading process a fruitful exercise. Brown and Duguid have written a very thought-provoking book that makes you stop, think and consider the implications of the so-called information revolution. Yet, the authors manage admirably to address the topic of information — in a world which is increasingly labelled as driven by a knowledge-based economy — without forcing their views upon the reader.



The principle idea developed throughout the book is aptly highlighted in the opening pages that "... all the fuzzy stuff that lies around the edges — context, background, history, common knowledge, social resources ... is not as irrelevant as it may seem. It provides valuable balance and perspective. It holds alternatives, offers breath of vision and indicates choices," state Brown and Duguid. "Indeed, ultimately it is only with the help of what lies beyond it that any sense can be made of the information that absorbs so much attention."

To be useful, information must be in sync with societal needs. This is one clear message that the authors argue throughout the course of the book. In other words, we must never forget the social context in which knowledge and information must be placed. If we do, the consequence will be failure at our own peril.

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