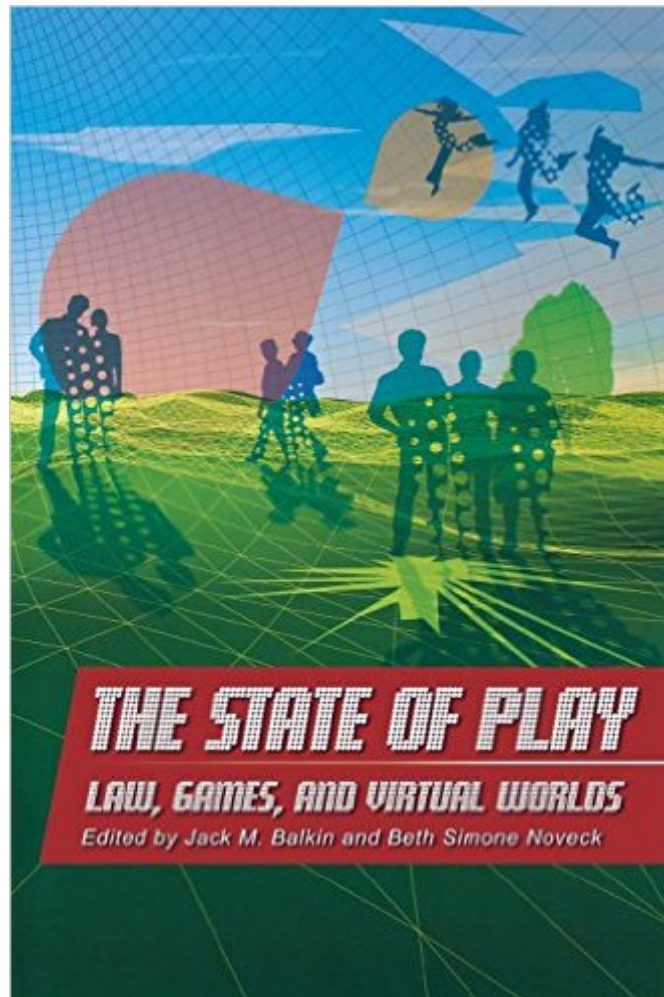# The State Of Play: Law, Games, And Virtual Worlds (Ex Machina: Law, Technology, And Society)

Synopsis

The State of Play presents an essential first step in understanding how new digital worlds will change the future of our universe. Millions of people around the world inhabit virtual words: multiplayer online games where characters live, love, buy, trade, cheat, steal, and have every possible kind of adventure. Far more complicated and sophisticated than early video games, people now spend countless hours in virtual universes like Second Life and Star Wars Galaxies not to shoot space invaders but to create new identities, fall in love, build cities, make rules, and break them.As digital worlds become increasingly powerful and lifelike, people will employ them for countless real-world purposes, including commerce, education, medicine, law enforcement, and military training. Inevitably, real-world law will regulate them. But should virtual worlds be fully integrated into our real-world legal system or should they be treated as separate jurisdictions with their own forms of dispute resolution? What rules should govern virtual communities? Should the law step in to protect property rights when virtual items are destroyed or stolen?These questions, and many more, are considered in The State of Play, where legal experts, game designers, and policymakers explore the boundaries of free speech, intellectual property, and creativity in virtual worlds. The essays explore both the emergence of law in multiplayer online games and how we can use virtual worlds to study real-world social interactions and test real-world laws.Contributors: Jack M. Balkin, Richard A. Bartle, Yochai Benkler, Caroline Bradley, Edward Castronova, Susan P. Crawford, Julian Dibbell, A. Michael Froomkin, James Grimmelmann, David R. Johnson, Dan Hunter, Raph Koster, F. Gregory Lastowka, Beth Simone Noveck, Cory Ondrejka, Tracy Spaight, and Tal Zarsky.

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Customer Reviews

When Judge Richard Posner first called himself and other legal academics "intellectual entrepreneurs," he was at least half-kidding (in a Chicago kind of way). But in recent years the "market" for legal scholarship has become among the most cutthroat in the world. Professors seem desperate to be the first to homestead new territory in any emerging market.The work of economists like Edward Castronova has demonstrated that virtual worlds constitute a new frontier, ripe for cutting edge scholarship. The authors in this book are staking their claim to its legal issues. But just being the first to a topic does not mean you have anything interesting to say about it. Castronova's work is interesting, but you don't need this book to understand it. The remaining essays in this book reminded me of cyber-squatted domain names. "What will happen?" they all seem to ask, but they don't offer many answers or even interesting speculations.The real problem here is that law exists to deal with real-world consequences, while virtual worlds exist to eliminate them. Law may eventually get some traction in virtual reality, but it hasn't happened yet. If you want to be there when it does, don't read a law book - get yourself into a MMPORG. Just don't plan on keeping your job or your marriage.

Great book, interesting essays about where our digital lives are going.

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