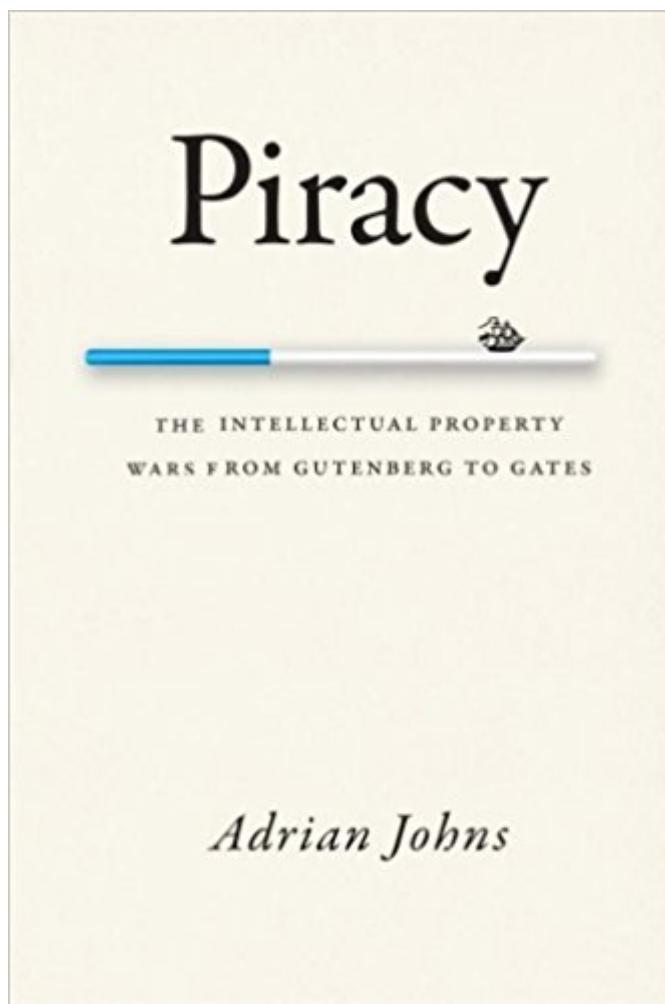


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# Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars From Gutenberg To Gates



## Synopsis

Since the rise of Napster and other file-sharing services in its wake, most of us have assumed that intellectual piracy is a product of the digital age and that it threatens creative expression as never before. The Motion Picture Association of America, for instance, claimed that in 2005 the film industry lost \$2.3 billion in revenue to piracy online. But here Adrian Johns shows that piracy has a much longer and more vital history than we have realized—“one that has been largely forgotten and is little understood. Piracy explores the intellectual property wars from the advent of print culture in the fifteenth century to the reign of the Internet in the twenty-first. Brimming with broader implications for today’s debates over open access, fair use, free culture, and the like, Johns’s book ultimately argues that piracy has always stood at the center of our attempts to reconcile creativity and commerce—and that piracy has been an engine of social, technological, and intellectual innovations as often as it has been their adversary. From Cervantes to Sonny Bono, from Maria Callas to Microsoft, from Grub Street to Google, no chapter in the story of piracy evades Johns’s graceful analysis in what will be the definitive history of the subject for years to come.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The recording industry’s panic over illegal downloads is nothing new; a century ago, London publishers faced a similar crisis when pirate editions of sheet music were widely available at significantly less cost. Similarly, the debate over pharmaceutical patents echoes an 18th-century dispute over the origins of Epsom salt. These are just two of the historical examples that Johns (*The Nature of the Book*) draws upon as he traces the tensions between authorized and unauthorized

producers and distributors of books, music, and other intellectual property in British and American culture from the 17th century to the present. Johns's history is liveliest when it is rooted in the personalâ "the 19th-century renegade bibliographer Samuel Egerton Brydges, for example, or the jazz and opera lovers who created a thriving network of bootleg recordings in the 1950sâ "but the shifting theoretical arguments about copyright and authorial property are presented in a cogent and accessible manner. Johns's research stands as an important reminder that today's intellectual property crises are not unprecedented, and offers a survey of potential approaches to a solution. 40 b&w illus. (Feb.) Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Adrian Johns's learned and witty book Piracy is... a compelling cultural history of the paired ideas of piracy and property from the seventeenth century to the present.... The best history takes readers from a familiar present to a strange past, and delivers them back to a present that can be seen in new ways. Piracy is that sort of history." (Nature) "Piracy shows us how the very notion of intellectual property - and its sharp division into the fields of patent and copyright - was created in response to specific pressures and so could be modified dramatically or even abolished." (Times Higher Education) "Invaluable.... Johns concludes in this challenging, richly detailed, and provocative book, that the choices we make about how to balance property, creativity and privacy will define 'the contours of creative life' for the twenty-first century." (Washington Post) "Johns's research stands as an important reminder that today's intellectual property crises are not unprecedented, and offers a survey of potential approaches to a solution." (Publishers Weekly)"

This book is a great study of intellectual property. It's written in a way which draws you in at the beginning but it is heavy going as you get further into the book. It is exceptional scholarship, detailed research, carefully referenced and a pretty thorough coverage of this subject.I deal with IP issues in my work. I am not a lawyer but I think it would be nice if every lawyer and every law maker, read this book.We are in an incredibly divisive time with copyright and patents hanging unbalanced in favor of artificial monopolies and at risk of curtailing creativity from art to biotech. These issues deserve much more than the partisan, special interest examination they get from our politicians and lawmakers today. Johns examines the issues dispassionately (unlike Lawrence Lessig's books on the topic - such as Remix - which take a point-of-view; a good one, but sometimes difficult to get both sides of the issues impartially from Lessig).Johns' book is well-organized for the general reader, progressing through time and topic starting with a gripping and completely mind-bending

story of identity theft which befell NEC in 2004; it's an inspired beginning if ever there could be one about piracy! Johns starts with the invention of piracy — as a truly man-made phenomenon, its inseparable connection with enlightenment, print and eventually with the making of America. He takes us on a time travel journey into a very modern and very contentious issue: patents in pharmaceuticals. Only after making us completely aware of how disliked patents had been in a 17th century England trying to throw off the remnant symbols of monarchy — patents had essentially been royal favors sometimes crudely employed and brutally enforced. Then we are guided through the terrain which uneasily and artificially separated patents from copyrights — intellectual work, or art from artisanship. Towards the eventual emergence of international protections — still only partially employed at the convenience of the state in question and the politics of the day. For instance, I was able, in the mid-80s, to buy any Western movie or any music in Saudi Arabia for pennies on the dollar from the booming Arab pirate industry. I suppose in principle, along with the gold jewelry I bought my sister, I could have been arrested at the USA Customs border; that I wasn't, demonstrates another compelling bit of Johns' story of how difficult it is to control piracy — a topic handled with fascinating stories in *The Pirate Hunters* quite as relevant and twice as worrying today. With a nice interlude into broadcasting and the formation of the BBC and the eventual squeezing hobbyists out of the communications business, Johns guides us into the 20th century and towards the ideal of an open society and what that meant, means and might mean: Major corporations owed their existence to the creation, purchase, control, and manipulation of patents. I guess you could say that about the RIAA too. Johns brings us into the digital economy showing us how Piracy has now criminalized citizens in their own homes — once the doorstop of the law and the shelter of the pirate. Although there is a fun treatment of phreaking, fuddling and hacking, it's too brief, too superficial; I'd like to see Johns' deep, historical treatment extended into the digital era much more thoroughly. What about sample-based music, the contingency of copyright, the patent trolls, hacking and snooping, what about News of the World or Obama's administration eavesdropping on Merkel, what about a deeper treatment of software? There's so much more which in Johns' capable pen could bring interest and enlightenment to these topics. All in all, an amazing accomplishment of a book and a thoroughly important read. *Adrian Johns. Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (Kindle Locations 5081-5082). Kindle Edition.

Very informative, deeply researched, and very well written, paragraph by paragraph or story by story. For each historical episode, however, details of the lives of the main characters are

discussed. Although interesting at first, these lengthy diversions become annoying after a while. The book could have been half the length and still made all the same points. The extra length is the reason I removed a star. I also found the references to be lacking. The author continually makes numerous claims in a series of paragraphs but then often provides one or two references with no explanation of which reference is supposed to support which set of facts. Nevertheless, the book does contain a great deal of material and seems fairly well balanced at a time when many books on this subject are narrow minded screeds.

I read this is a supplementary text for my intellectual property class. I am independently interested in intellectual property and Johns does a superb job of laying out the historical context for piracy in America today. I think that what it really missed was sensitivity to other cultures. Chinese and Japanese ideas about intellectual property were touched on briefly but not satisfactorily. He perfunctorily showed the ways that Chinese and Japanese companies treated IP, but I would have liked him to go into a little more depth. He writes beautifully, although a friend of mine with a bachelor's in comparative literature pointed out that Johns has a quasi-formulaic writing style. It's true. The last few chapters were excellent, especially as he delved into relatively current events. I would recommend this book to a friend interested in the legal evolution of intellectual property laws.

As an archivist and historian, I found the author's research to be detailed and thorough (though not necessarily exhaustive). While it's true that this book is quite a beast of a volume to get through, the course the book takes as its narrative is complex and well thought-out.

To students of intellectual property, connoisseurs of academic back-stabbings, and industrial history buffs, this book will be hard to put down. At least it has been for me. Yes Adrian Johns is an unrepentant scholar, but, he is not a pedant. For me instead of being dry, the new (old) words, the often profound sound bites, and new (old) data points in the narrative, are joy in the journey. Here are some of my favorites in the first 1/3 of the book: 3 Words: "gallimaufry" Kindle Location (KL) 762 "proles" KL 61 "seed pirates" KL493 Sound bites: "the cacophony that was the printed realm." KL628 "Charles II therefore viewed popular print with a queasy mixture of respect, unease, and fear." KL404 "doppelganger multinational" KL263 Data points: "In 1447 Venice passed the first general statute providing for patents covering inventions. It allowed that inventors or introducers of devices new to the Venetian territory would be protected against imitations for ten years..." KL262 "In the eighteenth century, for example, copyright was invented, and in the nineteenth century

intellectual property came into existence." KL204 "The entire second half of DON QUIXOTE amounts to a sharp satire on the nature of print a century and a half after Gutenberg." KL132 Hope you enjoy this as much as I have!

Dry as dust but extremely informative and leaves the reader with a solid historical foundation of Piracy. A little conservative but when dealing with Piracy I'm inclined to agree. Worth your time...but like all University of Chicago texts this one will test your commitment to the process. Highly recommended for the committed reader and amateur historians.

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