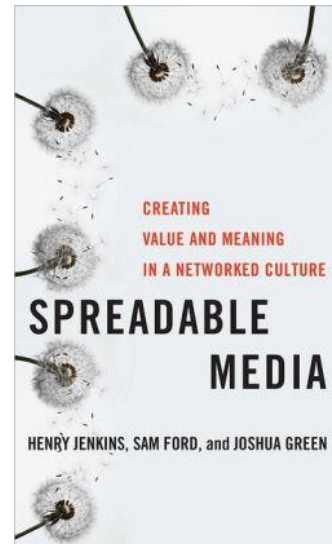Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, **Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture**, New York, NY: New York University Press, 2013, 352 pp., $23.95 (hardcover).

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"If it doesn't spread, it's dead." This catchy marketing slogan is, happily, only found on the book jacket of **Spreadable Media**. Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green take pains to avoid simplistic pronouncements and instead offer an encompassing and engaged discussion of the complex and diverse ways in which various forms of media are circulated in the so-called Web 2.0 era. Because of the lead author's previous cutting-edge work on media fandom and participatory-convergence culture, the co-authors' professional involvement in strategic communications, and the book's origins in the MIT-based Convergence Culture Consortium, the scope of the book is broad. Each of the eight chapters (including the introduction) is between 30 and 40 pages long and draws on a range of theoretical perspectives, empirical research, and examples. American entertainment media culture is at its core, with two parallel tracks on digital marketing and alternative media and political/social protest. *Spreadable Media* can also be considered an edited collection of sorts, with multiple references to the online "enhanced version," which includes blog-style pieces by a number of scholars whose work is discussed. This approach and format are *Spreadable Media*'s greatest strengths but also prove to be its weaknesses in places.

The introductory chapter presents and contextualizes the concept of media *spreadability*—"the continuous process of repurposing and recirculation" (p. 27) by individuals, communities, and corporations. It is contrasted to the media industry notions of "stickiness" (drawing people to traditionally produced content and keeping them there) and the other extreme, user-produced content. Instead Jenkins, Ford, and Green suggest that we think in terms of "user-circulated content," which recognizes the continued significance of mass media content but takes into account both authorized and unauthorized circulation (i.e., piracy). Recognizing the limitations of metaphor, they explain that spreadability is not just about breadth of coverage but also about depth—"deep engagement within a niche community" (p. 22). They draw on medium theory (Innis) and cultural anthropology (Addadurai) to locate spreadability within the larger contemporary mediascape and patterns of global media flow, taking care to avoid technological determinism or overemphasizing the liberatory potential of bottom-up/grassroots circulation.

Chapters 1 and 2 set out to explain the book's subtitle on how value and meaning are created in today's networked culture. The first chapter, the stronger of the two, begins with a detailed and critical account of Web 2.0 discourse and the business model it is built on. Yet in spite of the limitations of Web 2.0, its "mechanisms" and platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) also "provide the preconditions for

spreadable media" (p. 49). It also provides an in-depth exploration of the tensions between commodification and piracy, between engagement and exploitation of fan or user labor, and between economic and social motives for material and cultural exchanges. Notions of the gift economy underpinning participatory fan culture are mapped out, with reference to "residual" practices such as barn raising and "older values . . . of reciprocity, collectivity and fairness" (p. 71). Efforts by corporations to create public relations and marketing campaigns that appear to be user generated or that identify and try to engage "influencers" in online communities are also discussed. Chapter 2 is meant to develop and extend the central argument of value and worth, but it does not live up to its promise. While it develops the notion of hybrid values of exchange (pp. 90-95), it merely repeats others (e.g., Paul Booth's notion of digi-gratis in relation to fan labor and gifting belonged in Chapter 1). The rest of the chapter focuses on residual culture, based on the work of Raymond Williams, whose name, oddly, is mentioned for the first time on page 95. It is interesting to read about the function of YouTube as an archive/marketplace that enables older television shows to be recirculated and reappraised, as well as the function of eBay to turn appraisal into a participatory practice. However, this discussion could have been condensed and included as a subsection elsewhere.

Chapters 3 and 4 on spreadable entertainment media content and participatory culture are the strongest in the book, in no small part because they directly build on Jenkins' extensive body of work and zeitgeist thinking in this area. The authors elaborate on issues of piracy, the media industry preference for stickiness, and fraught consumer/producer relations. They point to a shift from an appointment-based model of television viewing to an engagement-based one as a result of downloading and timeshifting (DVR) technologies. "Such models," they argue, "value the spread of media texts as these engaged audiences are more likely to recommend, discuss, research, pass along, and even generate new material in response" (p. 116). Borrowing from Grant McCracken, they describe such viewers as "multipliers." The implication is that in the Web 2.0 era, such activity is not only more widespread than in the original WWW era but also more visible to and therefore more valued by media content producers. The authors illustrate the ways in which American television networks are increasingly looking for ways to commodify these engaged audiences, including through making programming available on alternative platforms, data mining online activities, reaching out to certain fan communities, and sanctioning certain kinds of fan production. Based on data from my "Television 2.0" research project, I am less optimistic that the television industry will move away from its dominant value system based on audience measurement through ratings any time soon. In the words of the network executive quoted in Chapter 3, "we'd rather have a million TV viewers than a million streaming viewers because we make more money from TV viewers" (p. 120).

The next chapter asks and then proceeds to answer a related and long overdue question in audience reception and fan studies: "What constitutes meaningful participation?" At its broadest, this chapter is a critical reworking of Jenkins' 1992 concept of textual poaching. Participation is no longer synonymous with activity, with "lurking" and "peripheral participation" given their due. The authors trace participatory culture back to the days of ham radio, seeing the current Web 2.0 era as offering the technological tools needed to expand cultural production and extend circulation. They stop short of linking spreadable media to democratization or arguing that it provides a direct challenge to "Big Media." Instead, the authors deftly tease out the differences between participation and resistance. Borrowing from Daniel

Dayan (who in turn draws on Habermas), they reconceptualise audiences as *publics*, of which fandoms are but one type. They also describe a number of activist publics as well as those publics that cocreate content with media corporations. Finally, and very importantly, they address the issue of unequal participation that occurs as a result of a lack of digital access or disposable income. In short, the answer to the chapter's question is, "It's complicated."

The next two chapters set out to develop the two tracks I mentioned above: the creative industries and alternative media, respectively. Chapter 5, as suggested by the title "Designing for Spreadability," has been specifically written for the second readership identified in the book's preface—communications professionals (and students, I would add). The decision to be prescriptive has the unfortunate effect of foreclosing opportunities to critically examine the consumerist culture that is at the core of all advertising campaigns, spreadable or sticky. (To be fair, Jenkins, Ford, and Green tackle what they call "rumour campaigns" that cause harm to specific individuals and communities). Chapter 6 serves as a counterbalance with a discussion of a range of nonmainstream media content such as the Dr. Horrible web series, web comics, games, apps, and independent film and documentary production, including funding and distribution. The authors draw on Chris Anderson's marketing concept of the "long tail" to argue that such content "may accrue value at a different pace, on a different scale" (p. 238). While Web 2.0 technologies increase the spreadability of such texts, the potential audience will most likely be made up of those with niche tastes and interests.

Transnational spreadability, the subject of the final chapter, is a critical area to address. As Jenkins, Ford, and Green point out, the primary focus of the book is American media and participatory culture, and this chapter is their attempt to correct that imbalance. However, there is a danger in adding a single chapter for such a purpose, no matter how well intentioned. In casting a wide net in terms of cultural texts and contexts—naming practices in Malawi, remix culture in Kenya, fansubbing in China, film production in Nigeria, hip-hop culture in Japan, ESL students in U.S. college dorms—the intellectual "catch" does not cohere to support the central argument that "spreadability may enhance cultural diversity" (p. 261). As for the interesting discussions on uneven transnational media flows and cultural hybridity, I am not convinced that the speadabiliIity builds on the established conceptual frameworks.

As for the online contributions in the enhanced version on the *Spreadable Media* website, they are part of a novel effort in academic transmedia storytelling. That said, I was disappointed that they didn't flesh out theoretical frameworks or provide results from empirical studies as I had expected. To sum up, *Spreadable Media* is spread too thin in places, but there is more than enough solid analysis and detailed examples to make it sticky enough for the intended readerships of media scholars, media professionals, and fans.