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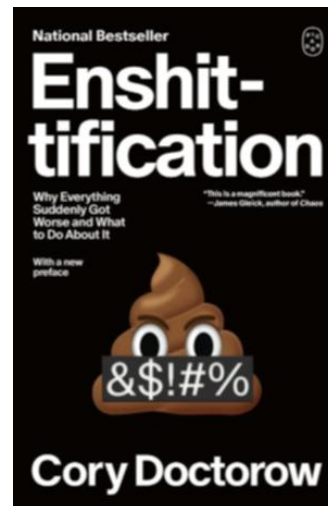
Doctorow, C. (2025). *Enshittification: Why everything suddenly got worse and what to do about it*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

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Digital platforms are no longer quiet conveniences operating at the margins of modern life. They are the core infrastructure through which people communicate, gather news, work, shop, and engage in public discourse. Higher education is thoroughly bound up in this shift. Universities and schools now rely heavily on commercial platform ecosystems to run day-to-day teaching, assessment, communication, learning analytics, and institutional administration. The recent surge in generative artificial intelligence has only deepened this integration, cementing commercial tech vendors as central actors in academic practice rather than simple external service providers.



These shifts were initially greeted with widespread enthusiasm. Commercial platforms promised operational efficiency, expanded access to resources, personalized instruction, and unprecedented collaborative reach. Yet education scholars have increasingly shown that these tools are far from neutral pedagogical utilities. They actively reconfigure institutional decision-making, academic labor, data governance, and the fundamental relationship between public universities and private tech corporations (Selwyn, 2022; van Dijck et al., 2018). Debate surrounding educational platforms has thus evolved far beyond technical capability or instructional strategy; it is now a matter of institutional governance, political economy, and public policy.

This changing landscape makes **Cory Doctorow's** *Enshittification: Why Everything Suddenly Got Worse and What to Do About It* especially timely. Doctorow contends that the widespread decline across major digital platforms is neither an accidental glitch nor a string of isolated executive failures. Rather, it represents a predictable lifecycle driven by market concentration, weak antitrust enforcement, and financial incentives that consistently privilege short-term shareholder extraction over user value. He

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uses the deliberately blunt term “enshittification” to describe this three-stage progression: platforms first offer genuine utility to attract end users, later pivot that value toward commercial business clients, and ultimately squeeze both groups to maximize corporate profits as service quality steadily decays.

While the book's title carries a sharp rhetorical edge, the underlying analysis is built on rigorous structural logic. Doctorow does not argue that technological advance leads automatically to bad outcomes. Instead, he demonstrates how technologies develop within legal, regulatory, and economic environments that reward monopoly power, punish interoperability, and trap institutions inside proprietary silos. His target is not software code in the abstract, but the market rules and policy choices that dictate how software ecosystems evolve over time. For higher education, this structural perspective carries urgent implications. Modern universities depend continuously on commercial vendors for learning management systems, cloud infrastructure, video communications, student record engines, and artificial intelligence suites. While these systems offer genuine operational benefits, they also raise pressing challenges regarding institutional autonomy, data sovereignty, long-term fiscal sustainability, and vendor lock-in with a handful of global tech conglomerates. Critical scholarship confirms that commercial platforms are no longer passive backdrops for teaching, but active agents in university governance (Williamson et al., 2020; Williamson & Eynon, 2020). Doctorow's principal contribution is shifting the debate from short-term software features to long-term institutional incentives. Traditional edtech evaluations focus heavily on innovation, interface design, and immediate student engagement. Doctorow asks a sharper, more enduring set of questions: What power dynamics take hold once a platform becomes indispensable to an institution? How do vendor incentives shift once users and organizations are fully locked in? And under what conditions can universities maintain genuine strategic choice when alternative platforms become practically impossible to adopt? These questions are critical as higher education accelerates its reliance on commercial AI platforms.

The book is structured into four closely integrated sections. Opening chapters detail the mechanics of platform decay through vivid case studies of Facebook, Amazon, Apple, and Twitter. Subsequent chapters analyze the structural mechanisms that reinforce this decay, the legal and economic structures enabling it, and the concrete policy reforms Doctorow proposes to rebuild competitive, user-centric digital environments. Rather than serving as a disconnected collection of tech critiques, the book delivers a coherent framework explaining why identical platform dynamics emerge across disparate sectors of the economy.

For readers of *Education Review*, the value of *Enshittification* lies less in its specific anecdotes about consumer tech giants than in the diagnostic model it offers for evaluating educational software. Universities are increasingly embedded within platform architectures that stretch far beyond the classroom door. Evaluating educational technology must therefore extend

past classroom pedagogy to encompass market structure, platform governance, data rights, and long-term institutional resilience.

Doctorow's thesis offers an essential framework for critical edtech research. Although schools and universities receive only brief explicit mention in the text, his core model illuminates the changing power dynamics between commercial platforms and higher education. By tracing the book's argument from its architectural setup to its policy conclusions, this review demonstrates how *Enshittification* enriches our understanding of digital governance in contemporary universities.

The Architecture of Doctorow's Argument

The structural design of *Enshittification* is one of its strongest assets. Rather than delivering a disjointed anthology of tech grievances, Doctorow builds a cohesive, cumulative argument that progresses methodically from empirical observation to structural diagnosis, culminating in policy remedies. Each section tackles a distinct analytical dimension, producing a seamless narrative of platform evolution that avoids the superficiality typical of popular technology writing. He grounds his analysis in what he terms the "natural history" of platform decay, drawing a deliberate parallel to clinical medicine: diagnosing a systemic pathology requires mapping its developmental stages. Before we can evaluate remedies, we must trace how platforms move from initial value creation to power consolidation and systematic value extraction. This clinical metaphor keeps the argument analytical rather than personal. Instead of framing corporate giants as isolated bad actors, Doctorow treats companies like Facebook, Amazon, Apple, and Twitter as case studies illustrating systemic incentives. The individual subjects matter because they highlight recurring institutional patterns, encouraging readers to look past corporate public relations and focus on the broader market conditions shaping software economies.

The choice of subjects is deliberate and broad. Facebook represents ad-driven social networking; Amazon highlights e-commerce logistics alongside marketplace extraction; Apple demonstrates the walled-garden hardware/software ecosystem; and Twitter exemplifies rapid financialized restructuring. This diversity proves that enshittification is not unique to one business model but is an endemic feature of unregulated digital platform economics. Crucially, Doctorow acknowledges that these platforms succeeded initially because they solved real problems. Facebook organized scattered social connections; Amazon modernized logistics; Apple offered unmatched usability and security. Acknowledging this original value is vital to his thesis: platforms capture markets by delivering genuine utility before altering the rules of engagement once dominance is secured.

This balanced treatment strengthens the credibility of his critique. By recognizing genuine corporate achievements, Doctorow avoids reducing the discussion to a generic attack on tech firms. The central question is not why failing platforms collapse, but why highly successful platforms reliably degrade once they achieve monopoly power.

Doctorow explains this shift through a sequence of re-aligned incentives. Initially, platforms prioritize end users to build network effects. Once a critical mass of users is locked in, the platform shifts priority to commercial clients such as advertisers, merchants, developers, or publishers who seek access to those captive audiences. Finally, once both sides become dependent on the ecosystem, the platform turns on both groups, capturing the surplus for its shareholders while service quality degrades. This framework provides a clear, repeatable model for analyzing platform lifecycles.

In the book's second half, Doctorow shifts from describing this lifecycle to explaining why market forces fail to self-correct. He identifies a mutually reinforcing network of structural drivers, including aggressive market consolidation, hollowed-out antitrust enforcement, opaque algorithmic design, artificial switching costs, diminished labor power, and regulatory capture. Platform decay, he demonstrates, is not a failure of corporate leadership, but a feature of market design.

Finally, Doctorow offers a concrete legislative and regulatory roadmap. Rejecting technological fatalism, he argues that platform dominance can be dismantled through stronger competition enforcement, mandatory interoperability standards, robust data privacy laws, and structural protections for labor. This progression from diagnosis to cure gives the book exceptional clarity and momentum.

This structural perspective is especially illuminating for educational leaders. Edtech evaluations typically focus on immediate rollout and functionality. Doctorow forces us to adopt a multi-year horizon, examining how vendor relationships evolve long after the initial contract is signed. In higher education, where software agreements for LMS platforms, cloud infrastructures, and administrative databases shape institutional practice for decades, understanding these long-term power dynamics is critical.

The architecture of *Enshittification* thus contributes directly to its persuasive power. By advancing systematically from observation to explanation and reform, Doctorow provides a model that is both accessible and analytically rigorous. For educational researchers, this structure offers an additional benefit: it demonstrates how edtech can be evaluated through political economy and institutional theory rather than narrow pedagogical metrics alone.

The Book's Contribution to Understanding Platform Power

The lasting value of *Enshittification* extends beyond its memorable title; it lies in its sharp account of platform economics. Doctorow shifts the debate away from the moral choices of tech executives toward the structural incentives that drive market behavior, showing how platform power transforms public and institutional spaces. In doing so, he prompts readers to re-examine how markets function once a few dominant firms control access to software infrastructure, user data, and digital communication.

This structural shift represents one of the book's major intellectual contributions. Discussions surrounding big tech often fixate on controversial CEO behavior, policy slip-ups, or public relations scandals. Doctorow takes a wider view, contending that platform decay reflects predictable incentives rather than rogue corporate ethics. As platforms eliminate competitors, market pressures to balance user utility against shareholder profit evaporate, making value extraction the logical strategy.

This approach sets *Enshittification* apart from typical tech commentaries. Rather than asking if a specific corporation behaves responsibly, Doctorow asks how market structures dictate the trajectory of all dominant platforms. The focus moves from executive intent to institutional architecture, a distinction that gives the book analytical depth and ensures its arguments remain relevant regardless of corporate leadership changes.

A second contribution is how Doctorow synthesizes previously isolated domains. Antitrust policy, intellectual property law, interoperability standards, labor relations, data surveillance, and digital rights are framed as interconnected components of a single political-economic system. Readers are shown how legal rules, technical code, and economic incentives continuously reinforce one another to lock in market power.

This integrated view aligns closely with critical edtech scholarship. Researchers like Neil Selwyn (2022) have long insisted that educational technologies must be studied as socio-political arrangements rather than isolated classroom tools. Doctorow reaches a similar conclusion from tech policy, providing edtech researchers with a robust framework to analyze the commercial vendors supplying university infrastructure.

His analysis also expands debates on digital platform governance. Recent literature shows how digital platforms mediate public institutions by controlling communication channels and collecting user data (van Dijck et al., 2018). Doctorow takes this argument further, demonstrating how accumulated market power systematically shifts leverage away from client institutions and toward platform owners, resulting in a direct redistribution of institutional power.

This dynamic directly mirrors current concerns in higher education. Universities rely on commercial platforms not just for teaching, but for administrative management, research storage, assessment, and strategic planning. As these systems become deeply embedded in academic routines, questions of ownership, governance, and long-term dependency become urgent. Doctorow's insights complement recent work by Williamson and colleagues, who demonstrate that digital infrastructures now actively participate in university governance (Williamson et al., 2020; Williamson & Eynon, 2020).

Doctorow's analysis of switching costs is equally compelling. Beyond direct financial expenses, switching costs encompass institutional knowledge, administrative workflows, data reformatting, and professional habits. As

these operational investments compound over time, an institution's practical ability to exit a platform relationship diminishes.

For universities, this insight highlights a crucial institutional paradox. Initial platform adoptions often seem flexible and easily reversible. Over time, however, academic practices and administrative systems become so intertwined with vendor-specific software that changing providers becomes almost impossible. Doctorow explains why institutional flexibility declines as technical capabilities grow, a paradox that demands greater attention in edtech procurement and governance.

His focus on interoperability offers a practical path forward. Doctorow maintains that true market competition requires open technical standards that allow users and data to move across platforms without penalty. Interoperability is thus far more than a technical convenience; it is a vital mechanism for preserving user agency and curbing monopoly power. In higher education, interoperability directly determines whether course materials, research records, and student credentials remain portable or locked inside proprietary software silos.

Ultimately, *Enshittification* changes the fundamental questions we ask about digital tools. Instead of rating software solely on features or interface design, Doctorow compels us to evaluate platforms based on governance, accountability, institutional autonomy, and long-term viability. This broader lens enriches traditional technology evaluations, assessing tools not only by what they enable today, but by the power relationships they lock in for tomorrow. For readers of *Education Review*, this conceptual shift is the book's most valuable asset. Doctorow does not offer a specialized theory of teaching or learning. Instead, he equips educational scholars with a political-economic diagnostic tool to evaluate the commercial systems that increasingly house modern higher education.

Reframing Educational Technology Through Doctorow's Lens

Because Doctorow does not explicitly write about education, applying his thesis to higher education requires a translation of his concepts, a translation that yields valuable scholarly insights. By analyzing software outside traditional educational discourse, *Enshittification* offers a fresh perspective untethered from common edtech assumptions. Rather than asking how digital tools enhance student learning, Doctorow asks how digital infrastructures evolve once they become indispensable, a shift that opens new avenues for critical edtech research. Educational technology has traditionally been evaluated through metrics of pedagogical efficacy. Researchers investigate whether software improves learning outcomes, increases student engagement, or streamlines instruction. While these questions remain vital, they concentrate heavily on immediate instructional performance. Doctorow directs attention to the long-term structural lifecycle of the platform itself, examining how power dynamics between vendors and user communities evolve over time.

Viewed through Doctorow's lens, commercial edtech tools are no longer simple classroom utilities; they represent evolving institutional dependencies. When a university adopts an LMS, cloud suite, or AI system, it gradually reorganizes teaching, assessment, administration, and research around that software. As these architectures become embedded in daily academic operations, technical decisions made by private vendors increasingly dictate institutional practices.

This perspective aligns with and extends research on the "platformization" of higher education (van Dijck et al., 2018; Williamson & Eynon, 2020). While edtech scholars often describe platform expansion, Doctorow provides a clear political-economic explanation for why these dependencies worsen. His focus on market consolidation, artificial switching costs, and shifting corporate incentives reveals the underlying drivers behind trends that educational researchers frequently document.

This lens also forces a re-evaluation of technical adoption. Universities usually evaluate software during procurement, placing primary emphasis on licensing costs, technical support, feature lists, security protocols, and immediate usability. Doctorow encourages leaders to look past initial deployment and analyze how vendor leverage grows over time. The crucial question is not just why a university selects a tool, but how that choice limits institutional agency once administrative workflows and academic data are thoroughly locked into a vendor's ecosystem. This distinction is especially urgent as higher education rapidly adopts generative AI tools. Current edtech literature on AI centers primarily on instructional applications: adaptive tutoring, automated feedback, essay grading, and personalized content creation. Doctorow's work prompts a more fundamental set of governance questions: Who owns the underlying foundation models? Who controls institutional data and computational pipelines? How will licensing fees shift once AI tools become core infrastructure? And who directs the long-term development of academic AI?

These questions do not replace pedagogical evaluations; they broaden them. While universities must assess whether AI improves learning, they must also examine whether vendor terms safeguard long-term academic priorities. Doctorow successfully shifts the debate from instructional innovation to infrastructure governance.

His discussion of interoperability illustrates this shift clearly. Within edtech, interoperability is often treated as a technical detail allowing different software systems to transfer data. Doctorow reframes interoperability as a core structural safeguard for institutional agency. When data and workflows move seamlessly across competing platforms without penalty, vendor lock-in is broken. In higher education, open standards ensure that course resources, research output, and student records remain portable across LMS engines, student databases, and AI systems. Framed this way, interoperability becomes an essential academic value. Universities committed to intellectual independence benefit immensely when educational resources remain under institutional control rather than trapped inside proprietary vendor walls. The

ability to switch software providers without disrupting institutional operations supports both long-term innovation and organizational resilience.

Doctorow's framework also expands our understanding of academic freedom in the digital era. Traditional discussions of academic freedom focus on faculty governance, research expression, and pedagogical choice. Modern digital infrastructures introduce a technical dimension: choices regarding software design, data rights, algorithmic scoring, and AI integration directly shape academic work. Because these choices are frequently made by private software executives whose financial priorities differ from higher education's public mission, institutional autonomy now depends directly on software governance.

Perhaps the book's most significant contribution to educational thought is shifting the focus of analysis. Instead of evaluating standalone software applications, Doctorow forces us to analyze the platform ecosystems within which those tools operate. Classroom questions remain important, but they are situated within broader analyses of competition policy, vendor lock-in, data sovereignty, and public accountability.

For readers of *Education Review*, this broader perspective provides a rich conceptual vocabulary for studying digital education. Doctorow demonstrates that the future of edtech will be dictated not only by algorithmic capabilities, but by the legal, economic, and regulatory frameworks governing the corporations that build and supply those technologies.

Critical Assessment

A primary strength of *Enshittification* is Doctorow's ability to explain complex political economy without resorting to dense technical jargon. He translates competition law, intellectual property, software architecture, data rights, and labor dynamics into lucid, engaging prose accessible to non-specialists. Although addressing sophisticated structural concepts, the book rarely assumes prior expertise in tech policy or economics, expanding its audience while maintaining analytical depth.

The conceptual coherence of the narrative is equally impressive. The core thesis introduced in the opening chapters remains the guiding framework throughout the text. Rather than presenting isolated critiques, Doctorow constructs a cumulative argument where every case study directly reinforces his central thesis, giving the book an analytical discipline often missing from popular tech writing.

Doctorow's systemic approach is particularly effective. By focusing on market incentives rather than individual executive ethics, he elevates the critique above superficial outrage. Demonstrating how market concentration, interoperability, labor dynamics, and data surveillance function as an integrated system encourages readers to look past corporate controversies and examine the legal and economic rules governing digital platform markets.

For educational researchers, this systemic lens is highly practical. Edtech discussions too often center on software interfaces or specific vendor policies. Doctorow provides a structured framework that connects day-to-day software frustrations, such as sudden license price hikes or restricted data access, to systemic features of concentrated tech markets.

His balanced handling of the case studies further strengthens his argument. Doctorow explicitly acknowledges that companies like Facebook, Amazon, and Apple achieved dominance because they initially delivered genuine public value. Portraying these platforms as initially successful utilities is essential to his thesis: platform decay occurs after trust, reliance, and monopoly power are firmly established. This balanced starting point makes his critique of subsequent value extraction far more persuasive.

His pragmatic focus on policy remedies is another major asset. Rejecting technological fatalism, Doctorow demonstrates that platform decay is neither natural nor inevitable, but the product of specific legal and regulatory choices. While readers may debate specific policy proposals, his focus on concrete legislative, antitrust, and technical remedies offers a constructive alternative to passive tech pessimism.

Despite these strengths, several analytical limitations warrant attention. First, the empirical base relies heavily on a curated selection of mega-cap tech corporations. While these case studies are persuasive, they do not empirically prove that every digital platform follows the exact same decay model. Platform dynamics vary considerably across different industries, ownership structures, regulatory regimes, and non-profit contexts. His framework is therefore best understood as a compelling interpretive model rather than an absolute, universal law. Relatedly, the book occasionally portrays platform evolution in somewhat uniform terms. It gives limited attention to platforms operating within public institutions, non-profit sectors, or open-source communities where commercial shareholder incentives do not apply. Similarly, platforms operating under strict regulatory regimes, such as European data privacy and competition laws, face constraints not fully reflected in his primary US-centric examples. Incorporating these alternative models would have provided a more nuanced account of platform development.

For educational readers, a clear limitation is the sparse attention paid to educational contexts. Schools, colleges, and universities are rarely mentioned directly. Educational scholars must translate Doctorow's political-economic framework into their own institutional settings. While this conceptual translation is highly productive, it remains the work of the reader rather than the author.

Furthermore, while Doctorow's framework applies directly to AI infrastructure, the rapid rise of generative AI introduces unique challenges, such as massive computational costs, training data ethics, and foundation model monopolies, that extend beyond his primary case studies. Adapting his

framework to address these emerging dynamics represents a crucial opportunity for critical edtech scholars.

Finally, Doctorow's lively, persuasive prose style, tailored for a broad public audience, occasionally prioritizes sharp rhetoric over academic caution. At times, the rhetorical force of his argument outpaces the empirical evidence presented in the text. Academic readers accustomed to traditional scholarly monographs may occasionally look for more detailed engagement with counter-arguments or edge cases.

These limitations, however, do not diminish the book's core achievement. *Enshittification* is not intended as an exhaustive academic monograph, but as an interpretive synthesis designed to explain a pervasive structural pattern in modern digital infrastructure. Measured against that goal, the book succeeds remarkably well.

Its primary contribution is not offering final answers to every tech debate but changing the questions readers ask. Instead of rating software solely on speed, convenience, or novelty, Doctorow compels readers to evaluate governance, market power, vendor lock-in, and institutional autonomy. For readers of *Education Review*, this analytical lens provides an essential framework for evaluating commercial edtech ecosystems.

Positioning Enshittification within Educational Technology Scholarship

Although *Enshittification* was not written specifically as an edtech text, its core thesis aligns closely with key critical traditions in educational technology research. Placing Doctorow's work alongside established edtech literature highlights its distinct analytical contribution to debates on platform governance and digital education.

The clearest point of alignment is with Neil Selwyn's critical edtech scholarship. Selwyn (2022) has consistently argued that educational software must be analyzed as political and economic arrangements rather than neutral teaching tools. He urges researchers to investigate who benefits financially from tech adoption, whose interests are served, and how software redistributes institutional power. Doctorow arrives at the exact same conclusion from tech policy, providing edtech researchers with a rigorous political-economic model to evaluate the commercial vendors supplanting school and university infrastructure.

Doctorow's framework also complements research by Ben Williamson and colleagues on digital governance in higher education. Williamson and Eynon (2020) demonstrate that algorithmic tools and AI actively reconfigure educational decision-making and institutional planning. Doctorow adds a vital economic dimension to this scholarship, detailing the market structures and financial incentives that shape how these platform technologies are developed, sold, and maintained.

His work connects equally well with scholarship on the “platformization” of education by van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal (2018). Van Dijck et al. map how public institutions become dependent on private platform architectures that collect, process, and monetize user data. Doctorow explores what happens after these platform architectures achieve dominance, explaining how market power enables vendors to gradually shift priorities from user utility to value extraction. Together, these frameworks offer a comprehensive account of platform power in modern institutions.

Furthermore, Doctorow’s concepts clarify empirical findings in higher education research, such as Carlo Perrotta’s (2021) analysis of predictive analytics and platform infrastructure in universities. Perrotta shows how learning management systems function as socio-technical infrastructures connecting software, institutional data, and academic labor. Doctorow’s account of switching costs and proprietary ecosystems explains why these socio-technical infrastructures become so difficult to modify or replace once embedded in university operations.

It is important, however, not to overextend Doctorow’s claims. The book does not prove that educational platforms automatically decay in the exact same manner as consumer social media or e-commerce marketplaces. Nor does it claim that learning management systems have already undergone complete enshittification. Drawing such absolute conclusions would exceed the available evidence. Doctorow provides an analytical diagnostic framework for empirical investigation, not a pre-determined verdict.

Recognizing this boundary strengthens the review’s analytical rigor. A scholarly book review should highlight what a text contributes without attributing claims the author does not make. In this respect, *Enshittification* succeeds by expanding the conceptual toolkit available to edtech scholars, prompting researchers to examine how competition policy, intellectual property laws, and vendor incentives influence the software tools upon which modern higher education depends.

This broader perspective is vital as universities navigate rapid digital transformation. Generative AI, cloud computing, learning analytics, and integrated software suites are becoming central components of university infrastructure. While public discussions focus on instructional potential, questions of procurement, vendor lock-in, interoperability, and governance receive far less attention. Doctorow’s framework provides a systematic model for asking these critical governance questions.

For readers of *Education Review*, this interdisciplinary dialogue represents one of the book’s greatest strengths. *Enshittification* proves that understanding educational technology requires engaging with scholarship beyond education itself. As universities become increasingly integrated into commercial platform markets, the future of edtech will be decided not only by pedagogical design, but by competition law, platform regulation, and tech policy. Doctorow’s primary achievement is making these structural connections visible and intellectually accessible.

Conclusion

Enshittification will not immediately be recognized as a book about education, yet it provides educational researchers with an indispensable framework for evaluating the digital environments that increasingly shape teaching, learning, and university life. Doctorow's central achievement is not coining a memorable term but building a clear conceptual model that explains why commercial digital platforms tend to degrade after securing market dominance. By shifting attention from software features to market incentives, he compels us to examine platform economies through the lenses of competition law, platform governance, interoperability, regulation, and monopoly power. As argued throughout this review, the educational significance of Doctorow's work lies in this systemic perspective. Evaluating edtech solely on immediate classroom utility or operational efficiency is no longer sufficient. As universities become deeply dependent on commercial platform infrastructure and AI, scholars and institutional leaders must evaluate how these systems evolve over time, who controls their software architecture, and what long-term institutional dependencies they create.

Doctorow does not offer specific edtech policy blueprints or pedagogical models. Instead, he equips educational researchers with a diagnostic framework that complements critical edtech scholarship. His analysis connects classroom tools to broader political-economic structures, reframing edtech debates around public accountability, governance, institutional resilience, and competitive market policy.

This review has acknowledged several limitations. The empirical base relies on selected commercial tech giants, and the framework requires careful translation when applied to public educational institutions. Furthermore, the rapid rise of generative AI introduces distinct technical and ethical questions that extend beyond his primary case studies. These boundaries, however, reflect the book's purpose: *Enshittification* is best read as a flexible, interpretive diagnostic model rather than an exhaustive empirical theory.

For educational scholars, this distinction is crucial. The book's value lies less in providing final answers than in prompting better questions. How should universities evaluate commercial software once it becomes core infrastructure? What institutional policies are required to protect student and university data sovereignty? And how can higher education preserve strategic flexibility and academic freedom within proprietary software ecosystems? These questions will only grow more urgent as AI becomes embedded across university operations.

Perhaps the book's most enduring lesson is that technologies must not be judged solely by what they enable today. They must also be judged by the power relationships they lock in, the institutional agency they preserve, and the future choices they leave open. A software system that improves short-term efficiency while eroding institutional autonomy poses a serious structural challenge to higher education. Doctorow compels us to recognize this trade-off without rejecting technological innovation itself.

For readers of *Education Review*, *Enshittification* is highly recommended because it expands the analytical vocabulary available for understanding digital education. It invites scholars to examine digital tools not only as pedagogical resources, but as institutional, political, and economic infrastructures. At a time when higher education is increasingly shaped by commercial platform ecosystems and generative AI, this structural perspective is both timely and essential. Ultimately, the importance of *Enshittification* extends far beyond the consumer tech firms profiled in its pages. The book poses a fundamental question about the relationship between digital infrastructure and the public communities that rely on it. For higher education, that question is paramount. Universities have always adopted new tools to advance teaching, learning, and research. The challenge now is ensuring that the digital infrastructures supporting those core activities remain aligned with public mission, academic independence, open inquiry, and meaningful institutional choice. Doctorow does not resolve that challenge, but he provides an invaluable framework for understanding why meeting it has become so urgent.

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About the Reviewer

Manouchehr Madani Civi, MD, MHSc, MET, is an accomplished physician and educator with more than two decades of experience in university-level teaching and academic mentorship. Currently an Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia (UBC). His work in the MD Undergraduate Program primarily involves small-group instruction, Case-Based Learning (CBL) facilitation, and



the supervision of FLEX scholarly projects. Through these roles, he focuses on fostering critical thinking, research proficiency, and reflective learning within structured academic settings. These efforts are designed to prepare future healthcare professionals for the demands of modern medical practice. His academic background is extensive, holding both a Doctor of Medicine (MD) and a Master of Health Science (MHSc). He is further advancing his expertise by pursuing a Master of Educational Technology (MET) at UBC, focusing on innovative teaching strategies. He has authored numerous articles in medical research and books in education, specifically exploring how digital tools can enhance sciences learning. Ultimately, he remains dedicated to improving professional training environments through evidence-based pedagogy and the thoughtful integration of technology.

About Author

Cory Doctorow is a Canadian-British blogger, journalist, and science fiction author. He stands as one of the most perceptive and tireless voices shaping modern digital culture. A prolific novelist, journalist, and policy advocate, Doctorow has spent decades untangling the complex web where technology, law, and corporate power meet. From his early work as European Director for the Electronic Frontier Foundation to co-founding the influential blog *Boing Boing*, he has consistently fought for digital rights, open technical standards, and user autonomy. His non-fiction works, most notably *Chokepoint Capitalism* and *How to Destroy Surveillance Capitalism*, are widely praised for stripping away industry jargon and making high-stakes political-economic debates accessible to a broad public audience. Doctorow's framework of "enshittification" has rapidly become a model for understanding the modern web, gaining widespread traction among journalists, policymakers, and academics alike.



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