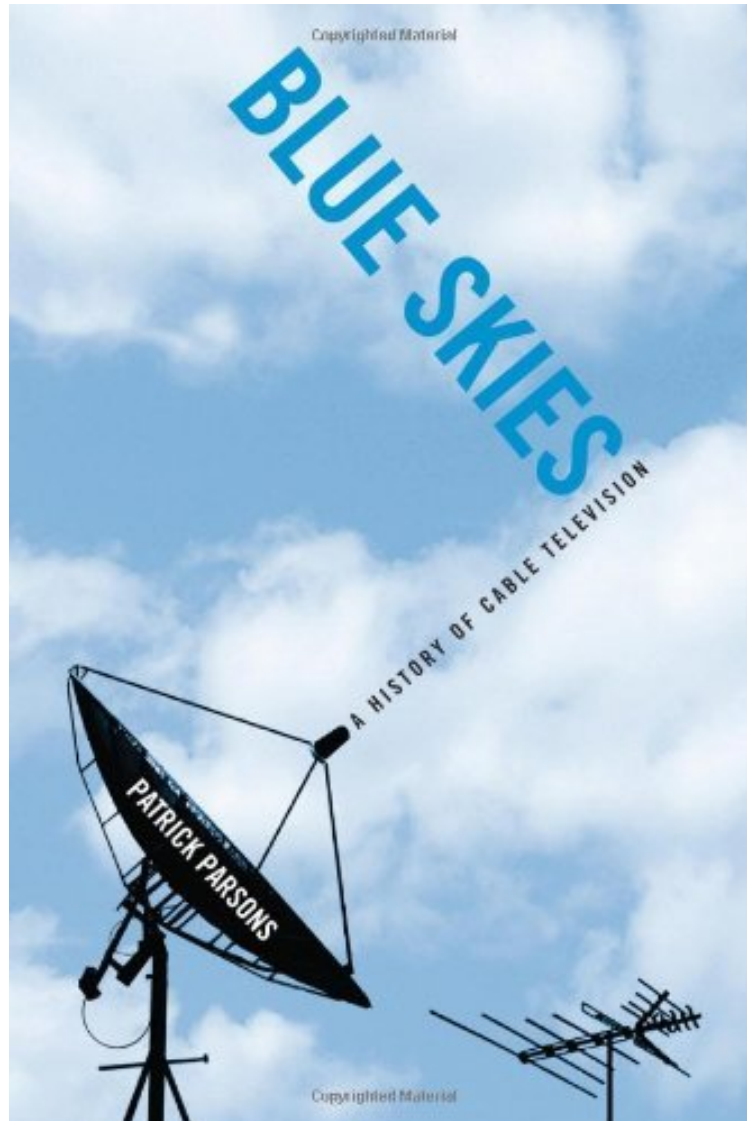


Blue Skies: A History of Cable Television

Patrick R. Parsons

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Patrick R. Parsons : Blue Skies: A History of Cable Television before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blue Skies: A History of Cable Television:

7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating story, riddled with errataBy Charles ColdwellOne of the blurbs on the back cover of this book puts it succinctly, "Scholars have long awaited a comprehensive volume on cable television ..." (Megan Mullen, Department of Communication, University of Wisconsin-Parkside). This book fills that gap, and the subject itself is fascinating and very relevant.However, after reading the book I have to wonder if an editor ever did. It seems like every fifth page contains a grammatical, factual or spelling error of some sort, which became very distracting. Here's an example of a cluster of errata that is very typical of the rest of the book:Page 570:

"The Bush administration opposed legislation, and the FCC and NTIA released a joint statement in March 1987 stating that the marketplace was resolving the problem." March 1987 was during the Reagan administration. Page 575: "He [Senator Al Gore] had called Malone the 'Darth Vader' of the television industry" George Lucas spells it "Darth Vader". Page 579: "Broadcasters, moreover, were partly successful in gaining retransmission consent, the right to withhold their signal or," It should be "their signal". Page 588: "The amplifiers boost the signal, but also introduce additional electronic noise ...". It should be "additional electronic noise". Page 592: "Two students at MIT learned of Robert's interest in a basic program for the Altair and said they could write it. Bill Gates and Paul Allen successfully wrote the primitive software, ...". Arguably, this contains a spelling error because "BASIC" is an acronym, and should be in all-caps. Indisputably, this contains a factual error because Bill Gates and Paul Allen were students at Harvard, not MIT. The whole book is like this. Maybe I shouldn't ding him two stars for these sorts of stupid errors; every book has a few. But the density of errors in this book gives it an amateurish tinge. So, although I really enjoyed reading it I'm only giving three stars, with the understanding that if you work in the field or are merely very interested in it, you simply have to read this book.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By david j. blackstone
Nice product.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The Partly Cloudy Industry
By doomsdayer520
Communications researchers now have a definitive scholarly chronicle of the cable industry. Parsons delivers an immense and exhaustive history of the industry, from its earliest days as a small town community antenna service to the modern mega-conglomerates delivering hundreds of channels of on-demand programming. Here we learn that cable isn't much younger than broadcast television, and the two industries have had a fractious but symbiotic relationship, made more complex by interloping technologies like satellite transmission and the Internet. Decades of inconsistent regulation by the FCC have added to the complexity of the industry's relations with the public. Parsons combines his strict chronological political and business history with the social construction of technology as a theoretical backdrop, showing that the public's changing perceptions of cable's technical possibilities and programming choices are a key influence on the development of the industry and its modern structure and practices. This extensive and encyclopedic tome will prove to be essential for interested students of the field for years to come.

[~doomsdayer520~]

Cable television is arguably the dominant mass media technology in the U.S. today. Blue Skies traces its history in detail, depicting the important events and people that shaped its development, from the precursors of cable TV in the 1920s and '30s to the first community antenna systems in the 1950s, and from the creation of the national satellite-distributed cable networks in the 1970s to the current incarnation of "info-structure" that dominates our lives. Author Patrick Parsons also considers the ways that economics, public perception, public policy, entrepreneurial personalities, the social construction of the possibilities of cable, and simple chance all influenced the development of cable TV. Since the 1960s, one of the pervasive visions of "cable" has been of a ubiquitous, flexible, interactive communications system capable of providing news, information, entertainment, diverse local programming, and even social services. That set of utopian hopes became known as the "Blue Sky" vision of cable television, from which the book takes its title. Thoroughly documented and carefully researched, yet lively, occasionally humorous, and consistently insightful, Blue Skies is the genealogy of our media society.

"What is new here is the degree of detail and description Parsons gives to the people and events that brought about the evolution of cable television in the United States. The links his book forges between cable pioneers and the chain of events that created the enterprise is fresh material, no longer clouded by speculation and guesswork." -- William R. Davie, Associate Professor of Communication/Broadcast Coordinator, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

About the Author
Patrick R. Parsons is Don Davis Professor of Ethics, College of Communications, Penn State University. He is the co-author (with Robert Frieden) of *The Cable and Satellite Television Industry*. He is also the author of *Cable Television and the First Amendment* and co-editor (with Steve Knowlton) of *The Journalist's Moral Compass*.