



# Cryptonomicon

By Neal Stephenson

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## Cryptonomicon By Neal Stephenson

With this extraordinary first volume in what promises to be an epoch-making masterpiece, Neal Stephenson hacks into the secret histories of nations and the private obsessions of men, decrypting with dazzling virtuosity the forces that shaped this century. As an added bonus, the e-book edition of this *New York Times* bestseller includes an excerpt from Stephenson's new novel, *Seveneves*.

In 1942, Lawrence Pritchard Waterhouse—mathematical genius and young Captain in the U.S. Navy—is assigned to detachment 2702. It is an outfit so secret that only a handful of people know it exists, and some of those people have names like Churchill and Roosevelt. The mission of Waterhouse and Detachment 2702—commanded by Marine Raider Bobby Shaftoe—is to keep the Nazis ignorant of the fact that Allied Intelligence has cracked the enemy's fabled Enigma code. It is a game, a cryptographic chess match between Waterhouse and his German counterpart, translated into action by the gung-ho Shaftoe and his forces.

Fast-forward to the present, where Waterhouse's crypto-hacker grandson, Randy, is attempting to create a "data haven" in Southeast Asia—a place where encrypted data can be stored and exchanged free of repression and scrutiny. As governments and multinationals attack the endeavor, Randy joins forces with Shaftoe's tough-as-nails granddaughter, Amy, to secretly salvage a sunken Nazi submarine that holds the key to keeping the dream of a data haven afloat. But soon their scheme brings to light a massive conspiracy with its roots in Detachment 2702 linked to an unbreakable Nazi code called Arethusa. And it will represent the path to unimaginable riches and a future of personal and digital liberty...or to universal totalitarianism reborn.

A breathtaking tour de force, and Neal Stephenson's most accomplished and affecting work to date, *Cryptonomicon* is profound and prophetic, hypnotic and hyper-driven, as it leaps forward and back between World War II and the World Wide Web, hinting all the while at a dark day-after-tomorrow. It is a work of great art, thought and creative daring; the product of a truly iconoclastic imagination working with white-hot intensity.

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## **Cryptonomicon** By Neal Stephenson Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

Neal Stephenson enjoys cult status among science fiction fans and techie types thanks to *Snow Crash*, which so completely redefined conventional notions of the high-tech future that it became a self-fulfilling prophecy. But if his cyberpunk classic was big, *Cryptonomicon* is huge... gargantuan... massive, not just in size (a hefty 918 pages including appendices) but in scope and appeal. It's the hip, readable heir to *Gravity's Rainbow* and the Illuminatus trilogy. And it's only the first of a proposed series--for more information, read our interview with Stephenson.

*Cryptonomicon* zooms all over the world, careening conspiratorially back and forth between two time periods--World War II and the present. Our 1940s heroes are the brilliant mathematician Lawrence Waterhouse, cryptanalyst extraordinaire, and gung ho, morphine-addicted marine Bobby Shaftoe. They're part of Detachment 2702, an Allied group trying to break Axis communication codes while simultaneously preventing the enemy from figuring out that their codes have been broken. Their job boils down to layer upon layer of deception. Dr. Alan Turing is also a member of 2702, and he explains the unit's strange workings to Waterhouse. "When we want to sink a convoy, we send out an observation plane first.... Of course, to observe is not its *real* duty--we already know exactly where the convoy is. Its *real* duty is *to be observed*.... Then, when we come round and sink them, the Germans will not find it suspicious."

All of this secrecy resonates in the present-day story line, in which the grandchildren of the WWII heroes--inimitable programming geek Randy Waterhouse and the lovely and powerful Amy Shaftoe--team up to help create an offshore data haven in Southeast Asia and maybe uncover some gold once destined for Nazi coffers. To top off the paranoid tone of the book, the mysterious Enoch Root, key member of Detachment 2702 and the *Societas Eruditorum*, pops up with an unbreakable encryption scheme left over from WWII to befuddle the 1990s protagonists with conspiratorial ties.

*Cryptonomicon* is vintage Stephenson from start to finish: short on plot, but long on detail so precise it's exhausting. Every page has a math problem, a quotable in-joke, an amazing idea, or a bit of sharp prose. *Cryptonomicon* is also packed with truly weird characters, funky tech, and crypto--all the crypto you'll ever need, in fact, not to mention all the computer jargon of the moment. A word to the wise: if you read this book in one sitting, you may die of information overload (and starvation). --*Therese Littleton*

### From Library Journal

Computer expert Randy Waterhouse spearheads a movement to create a safe haven for data in a world where information equals power and big business and government seek to control the flow of knowledge. His ambitions collide with a top-secret conspiracy with links to the encryption wars of World War II and his grandfather's work in preventing the Nazis from discovering that the Allies had cracked their supposedly unbreakable Enigma code. The author of *Snow Crash* (LJ 4/1/92) focuses his eclectic vision on a story of epic proportions, encompassing both the beginnings of information technology in the 1940s and the blossoming of the present cybertech revolution. Stephenson's freewheeling prose and ironic voice lend a sense of familiarity to a story that transcends the genre and demands a wide readership among fans of technothrillers as well as a general audience. Highly recommended.

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### From [Booklist](#)

Stephenson follows his startlingly original *Snow Crash* (1992) and *The Diamond Age* (1995) with proof that

he can do as well at twice the page-count, and not only that, but with the promise that this immense volume begins a saga that may rival Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* in its eventual proportions. Volume one, then, is the well-told tale of a World War II code breaker whose descendants end up trying to track down the secrets of the Third Reich's cryptographers--secrets that may liberate or ruin the cybertech world of the present day. Stephenson mixes historical and contemporary settings, handling both with great skill, as he presents a large cast of vividly imagined characters, notably including the original code breaker's granddaughter, and makes both the tale's technology and its conspiracies highly believable. His choice to tell the entire story in the present tense rather calls attention to itself, and, given a book nearly 1,000 pages long, every word is not really essential. Still, this is a book that should be bought for the sake of saying that you have it and read, however long that takes, for the pleasure and intellectual stimulation it is likely to give to most readers. Imagine Tom Clancy turning to cyberpunk, and you have some idea of its broad potential appeal. *Roland Green*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Earnestine Marcus:**

This Cryptonomicon usually are reliable for you who want to be a successful person, why. The explanation of this Cryptonomicon can be on the list of great books you must have is definitely giving you more than just simple studying food but feed an individual with information that perhaps will shock your preceding knowledge. This book is handy, you can bring it everywhere and whenever your conditions at e-book and printed ones. Beside that this Cryptonomicon forcing you to have an enormous of experience for instance rich vocabulary, giving you demo of critical thinking that could it useful in your day task. So , let's have it and enjoy reading.

#### **Silvia McElroy:**

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**Danny Jarosz:**

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