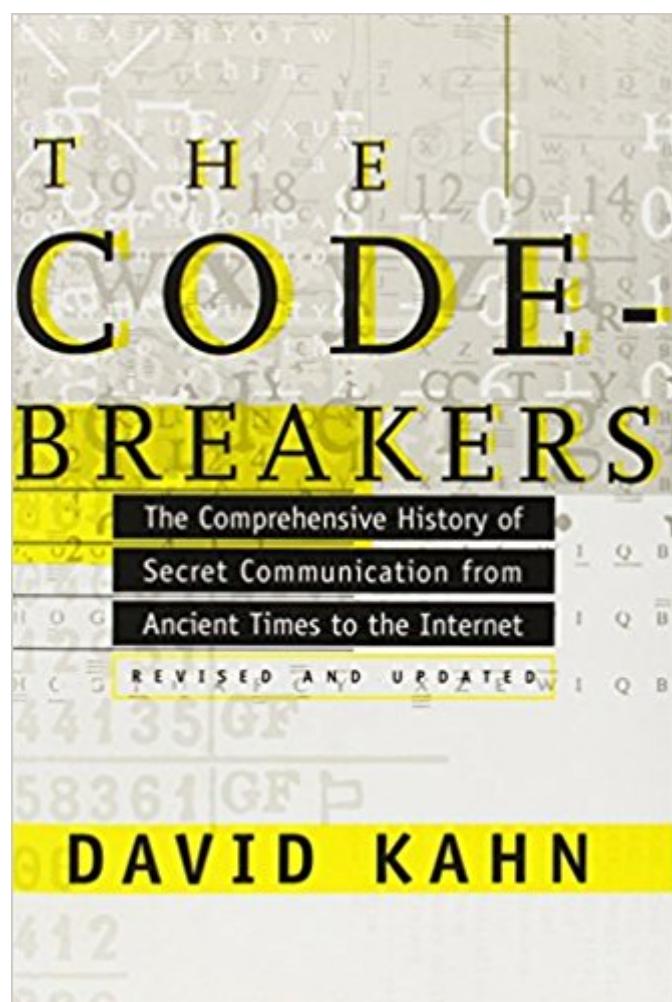


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The Codebreakers: The Comprehensive History Of Secret Communication From Ancient Times To The Internet



Synopsis

The magnificent, unrivaled history of codes and ciphers—“how they’re made, how they’re broken, and the many and fascinating roles they’ve played since the dawn of civilization in war, business, diplomacy, and espionage”—updated with a new chapter on computer cryptography and the Ultra secret. Man has created codes to keep secrets and has broken codes to learn those secrets since the time of the Pharaohs. For 4,000 years, fierce battles have been waged between codemakers and codebreakers, and the story of these battles is civilization’s secret history, the hidden account of how wars were won and lost, diplomatic intrigues foiled, business secrets stolen, governments ruined, computers hacked. From the XYZ Affair to the Dreyfus Affair, from the Gallic War to the Persian Gulf, from Druidic runes and the kaballah to outer space, from the Zimmermann telegram to Enigma to the Manhattan Project, codebreaking has shaped the course of human events to an extent beyond any easy reckoning. Once a government monopoly, cryptology today touches everybody. It secures the Internet, keeps e-mail private, maintains the integrity of cash machine transactions, and scrambles TV signals on unpaid-for channels. David Kahn’s *The Codebreakers* takes the measure of what codes and codebreaking have meant in human history in a single comprehensive account, astonishing in its scope and enthralling in its execution. Hailed upon first publication as a book likely to become the definitive work of its kind, *The Codebreakers* has more than lived up to that prediction: it remains unsurpassed. With a brilliant new chapter that makes use of previously classified documents to bring the book thoroughly up to date, and to explore the myriad ways computer codes and their hackers are changing all of our lives, *The Codebreakers* is the skeleton key to a thousand thrilling true stories of intrigue, mystery, and adventure. It is a masterpiece of the historian’s art.

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Customer Reviews

This book is not intended to teach the reader how to design or cryptanalyze codes and ciphers; it is a history book, and a really great one. However, the reader should be aware of a couple of things that may not be apparent. First, the 1996 "revised edition" differs from the 1967 first edition only in the addition of a final chapter to cover what Kahn didn't know (or didn't choose to include) in the 1967 edition. The first 26 of 27 chapters, and the references and bibliography associated with them, are essentially identical to those of the 1967 edition. This means that a number of statements and passages in the first 26 chapters, although correct in 1967, are misleading if one assumes they were written in 1996. I recommend that the reader skim Chapter 27 quickly before reading the rest of the book, so as not to misunderstand any of what's in earlier chapters. Second, keep in mind that in 1967 Kahn was essentially an outsider so far as the intelligence community was concerned, but by 1996 he was definitely regarded as an insider. Hence, the new final chapter is written with complete respect for the sensitivities of the intelligence community, which the original book was not. I was surprised to see one particular statement in the last chapter until I realized that NSA wants to correct a misapprehension widely held outside the community. Much more important, Kahn now knows a great deal that he has chosen to omit from the last chapter, including much that's unclassified but still regarded by somebody as sensitive for one reason or another. He even omits certain material that he made publicly available some years ago in his written testimony to a Congressional subcommittee.

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