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Cory Doctorow’s ‘Enshittification’ named UCSB Reads 2027 book

For the 21st edition of UC Santa Barbara’s award-winning common book program, the campus has selected a timely and provocative exploration of modern tech economics, corporate accountability and the public interest: “Enshittification: Why Everything Suddenly Got Worse and What to Do About It” by Cory Doctorow.

Winner of the 2026 Locus Award for Best Non-Fiction, “Enshittification” offers a “ razor-sharp yet subtly optimistic look at the soul-sucking state of the internet,” according to Publishers Weekly. Doctorow originally coined the term in 2022, after which it was named Word of the Year by the American Dialect Society.

The book, first published by Macmillian in 2025, details a three-stage lifecycle of modern digital platforms – from social media networks to search engines, e-commerce giants and app stores. According to Doctorow, these platforms first lure users with convenient and delightful services; second, they exploit those users for business customers; and third, they squeeze those customers to maximize shareholder value, leaving behind a degraded, barely functional service that traps consumers and workers alike. Rather than treating this decline as inevitable, Doctorow presents an actionable roadmap of legal, regulatory and technological solutions to reclaim our digital public spaces.

“The vital and timely themes of ‘Enshittification’ offer an essential opportunity to reflect on our relationship with technology, corporate accountability and the public interest,” said Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost David Marshall and University

Librarian Todd Grappone, in announcing the selection. “At its core, Doctorow’s work asks an increasingly important question for universities: Who controls the infrastructure on which knowledge depends? As AI reshapes how we discover, create and use information, libraries play a critical role in keeping research open, trustworthy, and in the hands of researchers and the public. We look forward to exploring this remarkable book with you.”

UCSB Reads 2027 will launch in January with a free book giveaway for UCSB students. The program will culminate with a free public talk by Cory Doctorow on April 29, 2027, at Campbell Hall, presented in partnership with UCSB Arts & Lectures . Throughout winter and spring quarters, the library will sponsor a variety of free learning, experiential and social events to explore the book’s themes.

Instructors are encouraged to incorporate “Enshittification” into their winter and spring courses; the library will provide free copies for instructors and enrolled students. Faculty, students and community organizations are invited to propose and co-sponsor public programming with the library. Anyone wishing to teach the book, participate in events or support UCSB Reads 2027 should contact UCSBReads@library.ucsb.edu.

Doctorow is a renowned Canadian-British science fiction author, journalist and technology activist. He has authored dozens of books, including “Little Brother” and “The Reverse Centaur's Guide to Life After AI.” He serves as a special consultant to the Electronic Frontier Foundation and holds academic appointments at Cornell University, MIT, Open University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 2022, Doctorow received the Sir Arthur Clarke Imagination in Service to Society Award for lifetime achievement.

For two decades, UCSB Reads has fostered a shared sense of belonging by bringing the campus and Santa Barbara communities together to read a common book that explores compelling issues of our time. Each year, an advisory committee of UCSB faculty, staff, students and community partners helps the library select an intellectually stimulating, interdisciplinary book by a living author that appeals to a wide range of readers and can be incorporated into the UCSB curriculum.

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About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.