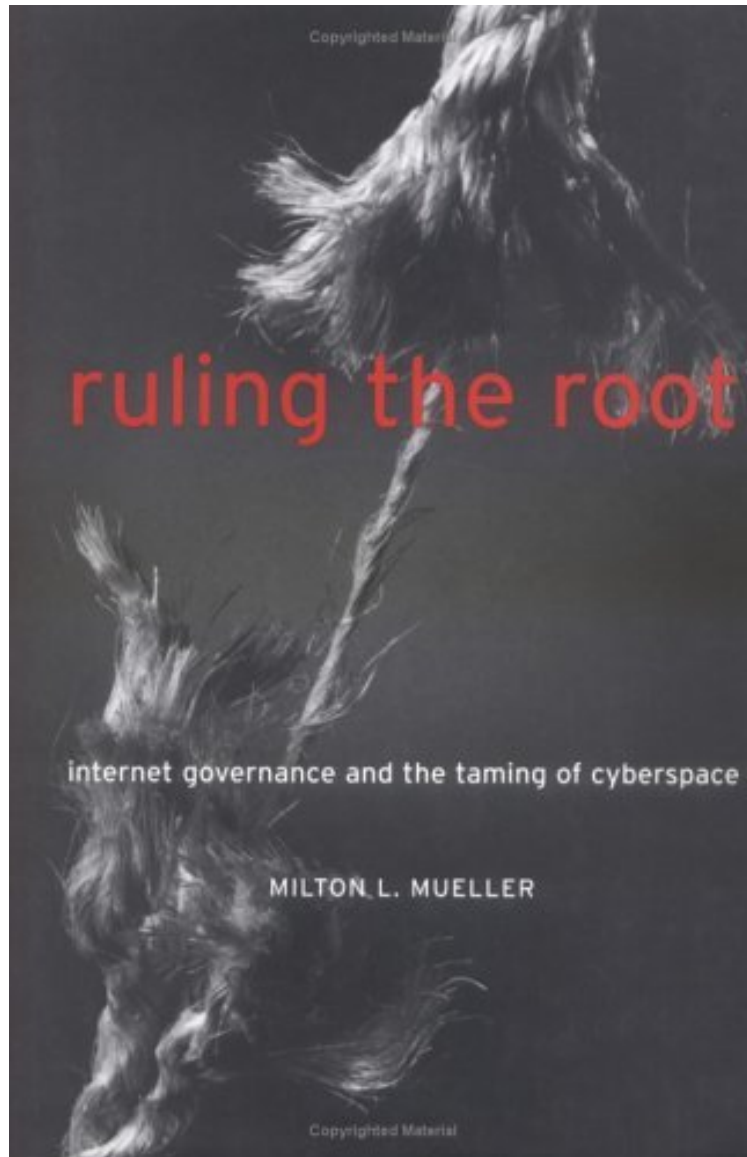


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Ruling the Root: Internet Governance and the Taming of Cyberspace (MIT Press)

Milton L. Mueller

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By Robert Cannon Mueller's work, recounting the Internet's Domain Name Wars, is entirely "interesting." Little is widely known about the history and origins of the Internet; what many think they know constitutes little more than mythology. Here is an excellent recount of the history of the Internet's development, and how conflicts with the naming space came to be. This is required reading for those interested and concerned with the potential success or failure of the Internet governance experiment. This is a continuation of a long history of excellent work by Mueller and is well recommended.

In *Ruling the Root*, Milton Mueller uses the theoretical framework of institutional economics to analyze the global policy and governance problems created by the assignment of Internet domain names and addresses. "The root" is the top of the domain name hierarchy and the Internet address space. It is the only point of centralized control in what is otherwise a distributed and voluntaristic network of networks. Both domain names and IP numbers are valuable resources, and their assignment on a coordinated basis is essential to the technical operation of the Internet. Mueller explains how control of the root is being leveraged to control the Internet itself in such key areas as trademark and copyright protection, surveillance of users, content regulation, and regulation of the domain name supply industry. Control of the root originally resided in an informally organized technical elite comprised mostly of American computer scientists. As the Internet became commercialized and domain name registration became a profitable business, a six-year struggle over property rights and the control of the root broke out among Internet technologists, business and intellectual property interests, international organizations, national governments, and advocates of individual rights. By the late 1990s, it was apparent that only a new international institution could resolve conflicts among the factions in the domain name wars. Mueller recounts the fascinating process that led to the formation of a new international regime around ICANN, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers. In the process, he shows how the vaunted freedom and openness of the Internet is being diminished by the institutionalization of the root.

"If you care about the prospect of losing your rights...this book's for you - perhaps even on a beach." Anick Jesdanun LA Times
"If you care about the prospect of losing your rights...this book's for you." Anick Jesdanun LA Times
"The Internet is in the midst of a kind of 'constitutional crisis,' with contending parties struggling, largely out of public view, for control of the 'root,' the one central point of authority on which the functioning of the Internet depends. It is a complicated story, but Mueller tells it well, demystifying the complex web of technical and policy questions at the very heart of this struggle; anyone interested in whether, and how, the Internet might continue its remarkable growth into the future would be well advised to start here."--David Post, Temple University Law School
About the Author
Milton L. Mueller is Professor at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies. He is the author of *Ruling the Root: Internet Governance and the Taming of Cyberspace* (MIT Press, 2002) and other books.