While reference to the impacts of colonialism and forms of neo-colonialism are not ignored, there is a sense of optimistic redirection in the book, suggesting a stronger focus on the need for efforts and solutions to be encouraged from within the continent to break the cycle of dependency, exploitation and corruption. The authors poignantly argue that, with the amount of wealth available, Africa must take the reins and through good governance control its own precious natural resources, establish new relationships with emerging economies, and modify its trade and economic relations so as to improve conditions on the continent.

A noteworthy aspect of this book is the editor’s attention to the explanation of the word development. Several pages of the introduction are effectively devoted to the exploration of the concept and not a frivolous attempt at trying to peg or define development from only one perspective/field, which would unconstructively restrict the relevance and application of the theory throughout the remainder of the book in context to the topics being discussed. Rather, it is emphasized that development is a multifaceted idea with various spheres of influence contributing to its success or lack thereof, and that intangible indicators must also be an important consideration in the measurement of development. An effective analogy is used on page xvii, stating that “[g]eneric as the term is, it is like a peep into a deep forest which one sees in immense form from afar but as one approaches it you realize that each tree has its own branches”.

The book should prove to be of great value to scholars/academics, policy-makers, think tanks and leaders both within and outside the region who need to understand the interlinking aspects of Africa’s development and how they are affecting its inextricable and ever changing position within the global community.

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Access to knowledge in Africa: The role of copyright, by Chris Armstrong, Jeremy de Beer, Dick Kawooya, Achal Prabhala and Tobias Schonwetter, Claremont, South Africa, University of Cape Town Press, 2010, xvii + 366 pp.

With support from South Africa’s Shuttleworth Foundation and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada, the African Copyright and Access to Knowledge (ACA2K) initiative – the international research project that surveys access to copyrighted learning materials in higher education – commenced in 2008, and presented its results at the 2010 Cape Town Book Fair. Empirical research on copyright policies and praxes was conducted in eight nations – Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda – in an effort at expansive inclusion of Africa’s many political, economic, linguistic, and religious practices. In that the editors represent a number of different disciplines, comprising law, management, public policy, and information studies, and regions, including the United States, Canada, India, and many parts of Africa, Access to knowledge in Africa comprehensively interrogates issues related to access to learning materials. With an ultimate goal of copyright reform, this study primarily utilizes qualitative interviews, judicial and policy reviews, and comparative analysis to test its two hypotheses: Are individuals in the countries studied maximizing
their access to copyrighted learning materials? What can be done to improve the accessibility of copyrighted materials for education and research purposes?

There were five broad objectives for the ACA2K project: to build and link research capacities regarding intellectual property issues across the continent; to develop best practices regarding copyright and access; to increase the published scholarship on copyright issues; to raise awareness of intellectual property issues and support copyright reform; and to develop the capability of educational institutions to address issues related to copyright. The participative oral interviews comprise a wide range of intellectual property stakeholders, including copyright owners, policy-making organizations, and educators and researchers; the information later resulted in policy recommendations in the countries studied. Further, the review of case and doctrinal law specifically focuses on the criteria for obtaining copyright and the scope of copyright protection, as well as exceptions to both.

The results of the study confirmed the researchers’ initial contentions that existing laws did not reflect on-the-ground usage. Rigid laws pose significant problems for universities and libraries in particular. Theft and vandalism due to lack of sufficient access has resulted in strict library restrictions in several countries. Similarly, as long as libraries do not feel free to “execute their mandates without fear of liability” (346), a major facet of the copyright environment remains unstable.

According to its own standards, the ACA2K project has been a success. Access to knowledge in Africa reflects a global scholarly engagement with addressing copyright and intellectual property issues. The study results were hardly surprising: “Ultimately, the ACA2K research has found that copyright laws are, at best, unreliable access-enablers, regardless of the fact that copyright law is founded on the notion of the need to balance the economic interests of rights-holders with the access rights of users” (347). From the outset, the importance copyright laws play in education systems is not underplayed, as it is asserted that “copy environments – consisting of laws, policies and practices – are one significant determinat of access to learning materials and therefore a key component of education systems as a whole” (3). Regrettably, some of these laws are sufficiently stringent to restrict even local educational access. A significant portion of those interviewed actually articulated a perception that copyright hindered access to learning materials. Infringement appears to be highest in nations with the weakest national infrastructures; indications are that current copyright policies exacerbate an existing lack of resources, making it difficult for many African libraries to meet the needs of researchers, students, and educators. It is evident that copyright policies in Africa frequently are ignored or unknown. In many instances, stakeholders, including universities, lack the resources to comply with regulations. Realistically, only a few South African universities have the means to support student and faculty research in accordance with all legal codes.

Thus, the ACA2K project team made a number of recommendations for improving access to copyrighted learning materials. The researchers assert that pragmatic, adaptable approaches to copyright policy for locally produced works are vital for access-building in Africa. Improving access will require changes to both the existing laws and stakeholder behaviors. Correspondingly, more national support is needed for local policy research. Much research still remains to be done with regard to distance education and copyright, but indications are that innovative use of Web resources could improve access in even the least-advantaged nations. Further, registries of public domain works that do not require permission would abate many of the current usage challenges. Perhaps most notably, ACA2K does not problematize some “clearly reasonable but perhaps technically illegal” modes of access, and even suggests that these actions may ameliorate copyright issues (346).
To mitigate the power differentials that typically exist between authors and publishers, authors’ moral rights were protected especially vigilantly in the study countries. In Mozambique, Morocco, Senegal, and Ghana, works do not enter the public domain until 70 years after the author’s death, 20 more years than is the norm in most places. In several study countries, public domain works are not free from restrictions. Access issues can be addressed through the right of education clauses in national constitutions. Laws that seem unnecessarily punitive or arbitrary likely will undermine efforts at public support for copyright reform. Copyright laws need to be made more flexible and responsive to the needs of users in each of the study countries. In other words, Africa needs context-specific, rather than more stringent, copyright laws.

In the interest of broadly situating intellectual property issues for an international audience, it would be informative to have a comparative sense of access issues, on and off the continent. That sort of global contextualization would be especially salient, considering, for example, the controversial copyright clearance deal struck between the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and Access Copyright, which threatens to compromise the fair dealing rights of smaller institutions. Nevertheless, even with copyright issues continuing to arise globally, there is reason to be sanguine. In that the study results have made it into university curricula and the agendas of national policy-makers, the international focus on improving access to copyrighted learning materials is both palpable and encouraging.

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Defeat is the only bad news: Rwanda under Musinga, 1896–1931, by Alison Liebhafsky Des Forges, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2011, xxxvii + 306 pp.

Few historians and observers of Rwanda are as recognizable as the late Alison Liebhafsky Des Forges (1942–2009). An expert on the Great Lakes region of central Africa in general and Rwanda in particular, Des Forges was best known for her work later in life as the chief expert for the African Division of Human Rights Watch. Des Forges’s career began in 1963 when she was teaching Rwandan refugees in Tanzania, then called Tanganyika. Subsequently she completed a degree in history at Radcliffe College in 1964 and graduate degrees at Yale University, finishing the PhD in 1972. Afterwards, she taught courses on African history at the University of Buffalo. By the early 1990s Des Forges was working with Human Rights Watch, calling attention to human rights abuses and ethnic conflict in northern Rwanda. Her work foreshadowed the looming catastrophe and in April 1994 she was one of the first experts to claim genocide was taking place.

Her knowledge of the genocide and events leading to it resulted in Leave none to tell the story (1999). Acknowledged by many as one of the best and most complete accounts available, the report won the MacArthur Award. In the years following the genocide’s ending by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), Des Forges testified for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 11 trials across Europe and North America. For arguing the RPF must also be held accountable for widespread abuses and killings, she was banned from Rwanda in 2008 by Paul Kagame’s regime. Less than a year later, she died in the