



Silk Road

Eileen Ormsby

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It was the 'eBay of drugs', a billion dollar empire. Behind it was the FBI's Most Wanted Man, a mysterious crime czar dubbed 'Dread Pirate Roberts'. SILK ROAD lay at the heart of the 'Dark Web' - a parallel internet of porn, guns, assassins and drugs. Lots of drugs. With the click of a button LSD, heroin, meth, coke, any illegal drug imaginable, would wing its way by regular post from any dealer to any user in the world. How was this online drug cartel even possible? And who was the mastermind all its low roads led to? This is the incredible true story of Silk Road's rise and fall, told with unparalleled insight into the main players - including alleged founder and kingpin Dread Pirate Roberts himself - by lawyer and investigative journalist Eileen Ormsby. A stunning crime story with a truth that explodes off the page.

Silk Road Details

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Author : Eileen Ormsby

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From Reader Review Silk Road for online ebook

Adrienne says

Wow! This was SUCH a fantastic read!

I suspected with this story there would be a lot of computer-speak, and lingo (which there was...but it was really well explained). But above all it is written from so many different sources - distant to, as well as completely immersed in the world of the dark net, and specifically the Silk Road Marketplace.

It really does read like a Hollywood blockbuster...and I'm very excited to see that it is currently being worked into a movie! I imagine it might be a little way off, in that there are many legal proceedings pending against the alleged kingpin and other significant players within the SR market.

But regardless...the way it all played out from inception to its downfall, is a great story with many twists and turns.

I now follow DPR's legal proceedings with interest, and as mentioned...can't wait for the eventual film.

Ellen says

A diverting dip into the dark web, with colourful characters doused in alternate ideas.

Koen says

Everything you ever wanted to know about the revolutionary darknet drug market. Well, everything known about it for now that is. There are many, many things i'd still like to know. A lot is still shrouded in mystery and the hard part is; we might never know the full story.

Since i became aware of the Silk Road early 2013 i've been fascinated about the website and it's proprietor Dread Pirate Roberts. There's so much to the story of the Silk Road (and it's competitors and copy-cats). At first there was amazement just about the existence of such a place and the technology behind it. Then there was this Dread Pirate Roberts, a fascinating character not at all like you'd expect the owner of the world's largest online market place for illicit goods to behave. He shared his interesting philosophical ideas in eloquent essays and gained lots of respect and love from the big community he build in rather a short time. Than came the drama. Lot's of drama.

And the drama continues to this day. The alleged DPR is behind bars for life and the Silk Road has long gone. But the genie was out of the bottle and new markets have come and gone. There are apparently more illegal goods listings now then there were at the hight of the Road. And there's drama almost on a weekly basis. The Darknet Markets subreddit is one of my favourites, especially at times when markets are seized or people get scammed. It's all just very entertaining.

But it all started with the Silk Road and that story alone is good enough for a book. Hell, there's a great movie in there ifg you'd ask me.

Eileen Ormsby gives a pretty complete, as far as i can tell, history of the Silk Road and DPR. The book is well researched and an easy read even if you've never heard of the Silk Road. It is a really good story with a lot of intrigue. If you've been following the darknet markets over the years there might not be a lot of new information for you but it's nice to have the complete story in one convenient book.

The one problem of course are the questions still unanswered. I for one hope that at some time in the future a definitive memoir will surface from the real DPR. Wether that wil be Ross Ulbricht or someone else? I'm not at all sure.

Mike says

Excellent account of the history regarding the Silk Road, the drug-selling website and the legendary online community that surrounded it.

If you just want a cursory overview of the Silk Road, look elsewhere. (Wired magazine wrote an excellent long-read article about the Silk Road story, can be found online.)

But for those who want to go balls-deep in the lore of SR, this is the place. This book pulls no punches in providing all the details necessary to paint a complete picture of how SR began, what it was like in its heyday, and ultimately its epic downfall.

The author even goes so far as to include many excerpts of text straight from the SR message boards to help flesh out this mostly online story. If it weren't for 90% of the story being about people sitting behind computer screens, this would make prime material for a Hollywood blockbuster. (It worked for Facebook!)

Well-researched, documented, and interestingly told.

ANGELA PETRIE says

I dreaded finishing this

This is without a doubt, one of the best books I have ever read. I first found out about Silk Road not that long ago. I'm always late to the party! I was very intrigued and wanted to find out more, after doing some research I figured that, this book had been given such positive reviews, I would start here. Silk Road takes you from the beginnings of the site right through to the end. This book doesn't exactly give an opinion on Silk Road one way or the other but just advises the facts and let's you make up your own mind. Read it if you're interested in the site and find out a bit of the dark web to boot.

Andrew McMillen says

A fine summary of the world's most popular online illicit drug marketplace, 'Silk Road' is the debut book by Melbourne-based journalist Eileen Ormsby, who reported on the website and its inner machinations from 2012 onwards. Silk Road offered a place for drug consumers around the world to trade high quality products anonymously, free from violence or police interference, and for a surprisingly long time, it fulfilled its promise of a borderless black market. It was an irresistible story for any journalist who heard about it – myself included – and early on, Ormsby established herself as a strong, non-judgemental voice in a crowded field. Her high visibility and balanced reporting earned her respect among the fickle, often paranoid people who frequented the site, and what Ormsby has set out here is the definitive longform summary of what went on there.

Her chronological account covers the very first online promotion of Silk Road in early 2011 through to its seizure by the United States government in late 2013, and the arrest of its alleged founder, Ross Ulbricht, whose criminal trial took place in late 2014, months after this book went to print. This temporal quirk does not detract from Ormsby's narrative, as much of the book is about what the site represented, and how its users interacted with one another, rather than the typical 'whodunit' that many media outlets preferred to follow – which is understandable, really, as Silk Road was such a revolutionary concept executed so well that it took many people by surprise. The absence of an identifiable figurehead – the typical image of the 'drug kingpin' that we've come to expect – made it a difficult story for many to grasp.

Having used the website throughout its lifespan, and regularly visited its accompanying forums, I was already intimately familiar with much of what is covered in 'Silk Road', but it is to the author's credit that the facts are laid out in a straightforward manner, with little flair or dramatisation; the story is so compelling that it barely needs either trait. This book is already an enlightening historical document so soon after the site's creation and downfall; I imagine that it'll prove fascinating for future generations who wish to learn more about a unique community that married large-scale online technology with illicit drug consumption for the first time.

Nancy says

Finished: 10 November 2017

Title: Silk Road

Genre: non-fiction

Score: C

Review: This was a quick read....but a real eye-opener! It tells the true story of Ross Ulbricht. He was the founder of notorious online drug market place **Silk Road** which rapidly grew to become the internet's hidden one-stop-shop for all things illegal. The author fills in several chapters with stories about several bumbling traders who grew into slick professional business forces. Ultimate bad-boy and scam artist was not Ross Ulbricht -- aka Dread Pirate Roberts (DPR) -- but Tony76!

If you feel like reading something different....try this book about "the internet's Pablo Escobar"

#AusReadingMonth

Jan says

The book is well researched and well written. It's a good read.

I have become interested in the rise and fall of the silk road since "The Untold Story of Silk Road" in the WIRED Magazine 2015-05 (<https://www.wired.com/2015/05/silk-ro...>)

Joel says

Three-and-a-half stars. An easy and interesting read, but Ormsby's writing isn't fantastic. Her editor ought to have been a lot tougher on her, as she repeats herself several times and outs herself as a bit of a square, almost but not quite understanding the technology and associated jargon.

Hussain says

Although it wasn't a total waste of my time, you get nothing useful from reading this book, sure it describes the Silk Road community in detail but there is (0%) information about the investigation and take down which the only reason you would want to read a book of this kind, my recommendation is to go online and search the magazines, newspapers, forums and blogs for any real information.

Eric Elston says

My partner has recently been holding a curious fascination with what is known as the *dark web*. In turn, I delved into the available information in the 'safe' internet we all are familiar with, also known as the *clear web*. The more I had read, the more I wanted to know about it. The internet we know comprises of only 4% of all web pages - 96% resides in the dark web. Think of that unsettling iceberg metaphor - most of it you can't even see. And the services provided on the dark web range from the subjectively illegal such as drug trafficking, to the downright morally abhorrent such as human experimentation, child pornography, and torture.

Silk Road details the rise and fall of one of the more tame sections of the dark web; encrypted online drug vending. It explains how another critical invention - the purely digital cryptocurrency *Bitcoin* - allowed Silk Road, the first of it's kind, to flourish into the 'eBay of Drugs' with a dedicated fan base that may have come for the safer drug purchases, but stayed for the libertarian revolution, helmed by the infamous online persona Dread Pirate Roberts.

This was a great read, primarily because the author held a very level and informative tone about the overall drug trafficking trade that didn't slip into a manic fever, like the majority of columnists and television news reporters so often do. And there was good reason to not wear the loud critic's hat, because against the mainstream media's expectations, Silk Road actually flourished into a civil online community with helpful advice on overcoming addiction, safe use of drugs, and the site even had a resident qualified doctor to answer user questions for free (or very small voluntary donations).

However, nothing lasts forever, and the combined efforts of the LEO (Law Enforcement Officers) scouring for human mistakes, the big-time scammers misusing customer trust, and the crippling hacking events, had all played a part in the original movement's downfall.

The supposed capture of the enigmatic Dread Pirate Roberts, the man behind it all, accelerated the site's demise. But in a world centred on anonymity, is the man the police captured so easily the same man that was so very careful and paranoid online?

The author, Silk Road's community, and I all have our doubts. Hence, the book doesn't really reach a satisfying conclusion, because it seems to suggest that the Silk Road story is far from over. But the inclusions of interviews and quotes from people who were a part of the community, and letters from Dread Pirate Roberts himself, all make for **Silk Road** to be a great insight into a world few know about and fewer visit themselves.

Jill Meyer says

Darknet.onion

Great, easy to read book which provides the history and downfall of the original Silk Road. Read this in two day, exciting, interesting and fast paced. Highly recommend.

Michael Livingston says

A decent and thorough examination of the dark web and particularly its use as a home for innovative online drug markets.

Keen says

4.5 Stars!

“I’ve never killed a man or had one killed before, but it is the right move in this case.”

First of all kudos must be given for the nice use of 80s sci-fi font in the chapter headings, which works really well with the content. This is a really fascinating account Ormsby’s style is accessible and nice to read, its well-researched and it also has some delightful twists and turns that make for genuinely thrilling reading.

She dispels many of the sensationalist myths surrounding the dark web, Tor and Silk Road, like the hiring of hitmen or crowd funded assassinations. As well as the talk of live filmed torture sessions and organ selling, this is largely written off to the work of scammers and time wasters. She confirms that the reason for the vast majority of people using Tor is because they are tired of being tracked or pestered by ads.

Without doubt the biggest attraction for most of the traffic going to Silk Road was for people looking for drugs, and they seemed to find what they were looking for at a price they were happy with, but as the author shows us, the SR project and philosophy was about a lot more than that...or was it?...

Yes there are scammers and awful people on there, but you would find the exact same kind of people throughout society from high up in religious churches, to global politics and high finance. Ormsby’s reasoned approach allows us to see both sides of the coin and draw our own more informed conclusions by the end.

SR was headed up by the charismatic Dread Pirate Roberts, now unveiled as Ross Ulbricht and very much suffering the long term consequences for his actions. She also covers some of the other rival sites that appeared and disappeared on the dark web, the likes of Atlantis, Sheep Marketplace and BMR (Black Market Reloaded), though none of these could rival Silk Road in any meaningful way. We also learn about the short lived Silk Road 2.0 venture which was a poor imitation of its predecessor.

This was an excellent read from start to finish. Many of the topics explored in here have been updated and some investigated further in Andrew O’Hagan’s “The Secret Life” which makes an excellent companion to this book, for those interested in the subject and I would also suggest O’Hagan’s ghost written/doomed biography of Julian Assange as well.

Byron says

A fascinating tale.

What was most interesting to me was Ulbricht's agorist philosophy which emphasised non-violence, that seemed to be forgotten when he had no legal recourse for the people who had scammed and threatened him, so arranged a number of contract killings.

He believed the state is responsible for the most violence in society, this is true but only because the state has been given a near monopoly on violence, violence is outsourced to the state. For those in what Ross Ulbricht might call 'counter-economics' the violence is done in the private sector.

None the less, Silk Road no doubt reduced the violence and increased the safety of the drug trade, and has probably brought the world closer to the end of prohibition, it's closure didn't end online drug trafficking any more than the closure of Napster ended online music piracy (a comparison the author makes).

Part investigative journalism and part true-crime, books like this are documenting the last years of the war on drugs and the beginnings of an era of reform. Historically important, and an entertaining read as well.
