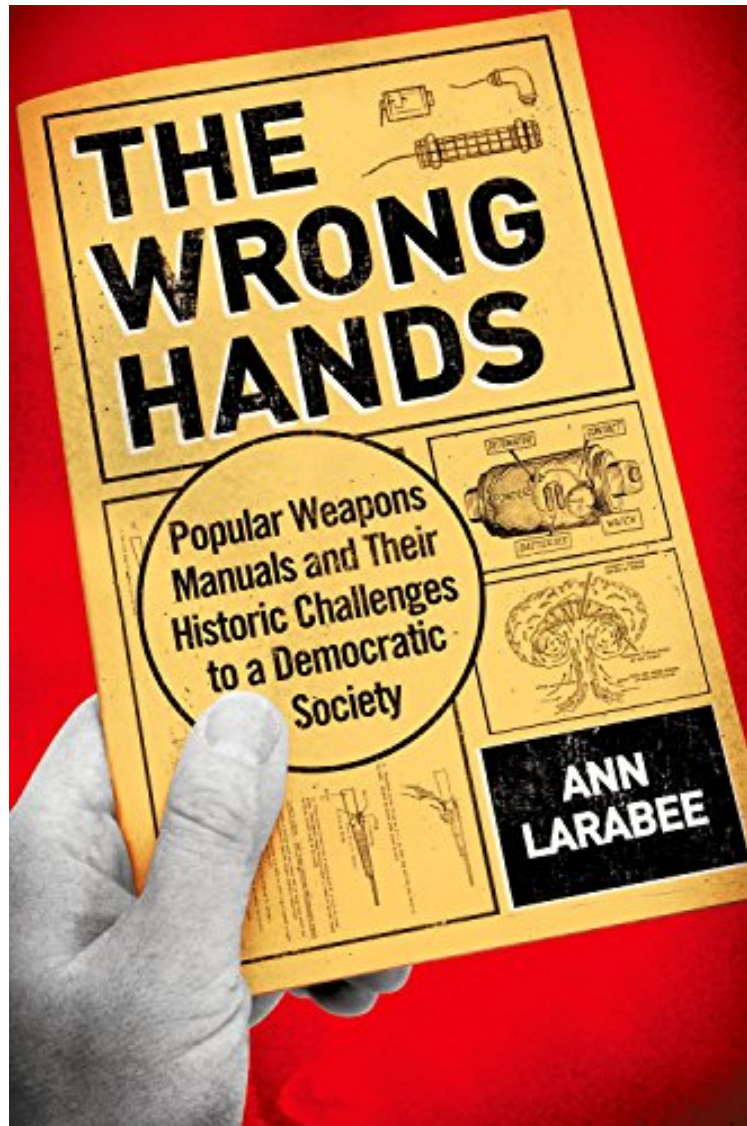


(Free and download) The Wrong Hands: Popular Weapons Manuals and Their Historic Challenges to a Democratic Society

The Wrong Hands: Popular Weapons Manuals and Their Historic Challenges to a Democratic Society

Ann Larabee

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Ann Larabee : The Wrong Hands: Popular Weapons Manuals and Their Historic Challenges to a Democratic Society before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Wrong Hands: Popular Weapons Manuals and Their Historic Challenges to a Democratic Society:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Does possession of information equate with intent to use that

information? This book deserves a very wide readership!By lyndonbrechtThis is an outstanding book on an obscure topic: the genre of books (and online materials) that fall under the heading "weapons manuals." This book offers an excellent historical survey--these manuals in one form or another go back to the anarchist days of the late 1800s. The topic bears on security from terrorism, and the right of the public to information. That public for this genre is often obscure and only now and then a worry to the authorities--Larabee says that's because some groups are considered to be threats, such as the IWW a century ago or environmental terrorism now. The authorities she says, see threats especially from groups questioning private property and government.It's an uneasy thing for democracies, as the title of the book indicates, because some of the material (many thousands of books, pamphlets and web sites) is explicit on how to do things like make bombs and is dangerous--although some of it has dangerous errors and enthusiasts might be more likely to blow themselves up rather than intended targets. Some of the source material is government-authored originally, and widely available including through on-line vendors such as the one this review appears on. Examples are special forces manuals on combat, training materials for paramilitaries and so on. There's also a category of fiction that in its way tells readers how to do something. Much of the genre has been published by what Larabee calls "paramilitary publishers" who market to a niche such as militias (and apparently often alienated teen boys). There's also a kind of popular mechanics niche market for people who like to DIY fireworks and blow things up, apparently like target shooting for gun fanciers.She has several chapters that discuss a fascinating history of these manuals. One, Abbie Hoffman's "Steal This Book" has been assumed by some security agencies as terrorist but Larabee says it reflects Hoffman's humor and the rebellious spirit of the time. She sees it as a "playfully perverse Boy Scout manual." Perhaps more serious is "The Anarchist's Cookbook" (1971) which is still being published, copied or plagiarized, and is increasingly taken by security agencies as evidence of criminal intent. And there is the issue: is possession of information the same as intent to commit a criminal act? Consider Edward Abbey's "The Monkey Wrench Gang," which is now often seen by the authorities as evidence of intent to commit ecoterrorism (the laws against ecoterrorism are extremely severe).Here's the author's point: "The history of popular weapons manuals reveals that their danger may lie less in their informational content than in their provocation of the emergency state in its pursuit of public enemies and its vulnerable hold on its own range of violence."0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very Good Attempt at a rare and unusual subjectBy CustomerPublished by Oxford University Press -- what can I say. Academic work that's also readable by ordinary folks. It gets most things right, and is very detailed. It falls down a bit on the occasional detail, but it doesn't detract overall. The only book of its kind (on weapons manuals) that I know of.

"[A] valuable account ... The Wrong Hands brilliantly guides us through [the] challenges to American democracy." - Howard P. Segal, Times Higher Education Gun ownership rights are treated as sacred in America, but what happens when dissenters moved beyond firearm possession into the realm of high explosives? How should the state react? Ann Larabee's *The Wrong Hands*, a remarkable history of do-it-yourself weapons manuals from the late nineteenth century to the recent Boston Marathon bombing, traces how efforts to ferret out radicals willing to employ ever-more violent methods fueled the growth of the American security state. But over time, the government's increasingly forceful targeting of violent books and ideas-not the weapons themselves-threatened to undermine another core American right: free expression. In the 1886 Haymarket Square bombing, a new form of revolutionary violence that had already made its mark in Europe arrived in the United States. At the subsequent trial, the judge allowed into evidence Johann Most's infamous *The Science of Revolutionary Warfare*, which allegedly served as a cookbook for the accused. Most's work was the first of a long line of explosive manuals relied on by radicals. By the 1960s, small publishers were drawing from publicly available US military sources to produce works that catered to a growing popular interest in DIY weapons making. The most famous was *The Anarchist Cookbook* (1971), which soon achieved legendary status-and a lasting presence in the courts. Even novels, such as William Pierce's *The Turner Diaries*, have served as evidence in prosecutions of right-wing radicals. More recently, websites explaining how to make all manner of weapons, including suicide vests, have proliferated. The state's right to police such information has always hinged on whether the disseminators have legitimate First Amendment rights. Larabee ends with an analysis of the 1979 publication of instructions for making a nuclear weapon, which raises the ultimate question: should a society committed to free speech allow a manual for constructing such a weapon to disseminate freely? Both authoritative and eye-opening, *The Wrong Hands* will reshape our understanding of the history of radical violence and state repression in America.

"A fascinating work of historical recovery and textual discovery. Ann Larabee asks hard questions about violence, terrorism, and free speech, and demands that we look to history to help sort out the answers." --Beverly Gage, Professor of History, Yale University, and author of *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in its First Age of Terror*"Larabee's brilliant, groundbreaking history explores fascinating and profound questions about freedom and dangerous information. Ranging from the 19th century anarchists to al-Qaeda and the Boston marathon bombers, *The Wrong Hands* is invaluable for understanding both the terrorist threat and the threat to civil liberties posed by overreacting to terrorism." --Richard Bach Jensen, author of *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism: An International*

History, 1878-1934"One of our best writers, Ann Larabee, brings extensive research and splendid prose to bear on a topic that is vital to democracy-how to regulate, if at all, speech that contains instructions for weapons and violence. With essential detail and sharp analysis, Larabee discusses the history of weapons manuals, the political use of technical information, the wide variety of governmental responses, the constitutional and moral issues at stake, and the challenges of the digital age. She makes a strong argument that in the contest between suppression and tolerance the legitimacy of government itself can become problematic." --Steven S. Smith, Kate M. Gregg Distinguished Professor of Social Science and Professor of Political Science, Washington University

"To date, *The Wrong Hands* is not only the most comprehensive book on the history of bomb making in the U.S. as tied to instructional manuals, but it also digs into corners and places the average person could not go, providing a thoughtful narrative about balancing the nation's constitutional rights and protections." --Lansing City Pulse

"Today, the internet and social media provide unprecedented opportunities for non-violent critics, actual terrorists and government officials alike to perpetuate their positions indefinitely. *The Wrong Hands* brilliantly guides us through these challenges to American democracy." --Times Higher Education

"For well over a century the United States government has regarded the circulation of weapons manuals and instruction booklets as dangerous and criminal. Ann Larabee traces the nuanced history of do-it-yourself weapons manuals from the late nineteenth century to the present to explain their role in the state's evolving policy toward radical dissent. The book covers a wide variety of topics from *The Anarchist Cookbook* to Edward Abbey's novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, which have been accused of inspiring domestic terrorists. It is an interesting look at the battle between free speech and the right of the public to have access to information that could be dangerous in the wrong hands." -- Skeptical Inquirer

"An entertaining, enlightening book on what happens when restricted information gets into the hands of the 'wrong people.' Highly recommended." --Choice

"The core of *The Wrong Hands* is not so much about the existence of these weapons and explosives manuals or their actual historical use by various American radicals from the 19th century until today, however. It is, instead, much more about the heated arguments over the publication, distribution, or possession of these manuals - a conflict of First Amendment/free expression principles and domestic security and law enforcement concerns....*The Wrong Hands* ought to be of interest to many lawfare readers" --Kenneth Anderson, Lawfare Blog

"Meticulously researched, often illuminating, always thought-provoking, Ann Larabee's *The Wrong Hands* is a nuanced and essential supplement to our understanding of the complexities of how dissent, and efforts to repress it, has shaped the United States." --Journal for the Study of Radicalism

About the Author Ann Larabee is Professor of English and American Studies at Michigan State University. She is the author of *Decade of Disaster* and *The Dynamite Fiend*, and co-editor of the *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*.