

# Delve Deeper into *High Tech Low Life*

A film by **Stephen Maing**

**This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Penny Talbert and Rebecca Zinner of Ephrata Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary *High Tech Low Life*.**

***High Tech, Low Life* follows two of China's first citizen-reporters as they document the underside of the country's rapid economic development. A search for truth and fame inspires young vegetable seller "Zola" to report on censored news stories from the cities, while retired businessman "Tiger Temple" makes sense of the past by chronicling the struggles of rural villagers. Land grabs, pollution, rising poverty, local corruption and the growing willingness of ordinary people to speak out are grist for these two bloggers who navigate China's evolving censorship regulations and challenge the boundaries of free speech.**

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## ADULT NONFICTION

**Allan, Stuart. *Citizen Witnessing: Revisioning Journalism in Times of Crisis (Key Concepts in Journalism)*. Chichester, U.K.: Wiley, 2013.** In this era of the viral video and people providing first-hand accounts of events online, the definition of "journalism" is becoming broader. No longer limited to newspaper and television journalists, news reporting has become an activity that anyone with an Internet connection can take part in. In this book, Stuart Allan discusses the concept of "citizen witnessing" and how it is reinforcing journalism's primary objective - to provide information to the public.

**MacKinnon, Rebecca. *Consent of the Networked: The World-Wide Struggle for Internet Freedom*. New York: Basic Books, 2012.** With regards to civil and political rights, the Internet seems to be a double-edged sword. Though there have been instances of the web empowering individuals

and communities in events such as the Arab Spring, there have also been a number of examples of government censorship and violations of privacy. Internet policy specialist Rebecca MacKinnon examines this legal gray area and brings to light how our ever-changing digital lives are not being sufficiently protected by our public policies.

**Ng, Jason Q. *Blocked on Weibo: What Gets Suppressed on China's Version of Twitter (And Why)*. New York: The New Press, 2013.**

Though often described with foreboding buzzwords such as "The Great Firewall" and the "censorship regime," Internet regulation in China is rarely either obvious or straightforward. This was the inspiration for China specialist Jason Q. Ng to write an innovative computer script that would make it possible to deduce just which terms are suppressed on China's most important social media site, Sina Weibo. The remarkable and groundbreaking result is *Blocked on Weibo*, which began as a highly praised blog and has been expanded here to list over 150 forbidden keywords, as well as offer possible explanations why the Chinese government would find these terms sensitive.

**Shirk, Susan L. *Changing Media, Changing China*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.** When the Chinese government allowed independent media outlets to compete in a public market thirty years ago, China's media landscape shifted from a limited amount of state funded propaganda to a deluge of independent journalism. There have been many implications, but none concerned the Chinese Communist Party more than the political criticism that erupted from its own population. Shirk's book navigates through the swift changes that have occurred and analyzes the Chinese population's demands for uncensored journalism.

**So, Sherman and Westland, J. Christopher. *Red Wired: China's Internet Revolution*. London: Marshall Cavendish, 2010.** China now contains the largest population of Internet users in the world and it is continuing to grow. *Red Wired* inspects the impact that this widespread adoption of Internet use has had on China with a particular emphasis on how it has affected businesses.

**Yang, Guobin. *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.** The introduction of the Internet to China has provided its citizens the means to better communicate with each other and with people around the globe. This has led to a population that is better equipped to organize, protest, and affect the world's opinions about their country. In this book about online activism in China, author Guobin Yang examines these changes along with the efforts made by the state to censor politically charged online interactions.

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## ADULT FICTION

**Sljie, Dal. *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress: A Novel*. New York: Knopf, 2001.** At the height of Mao's Cultural Revolution, two boys are exiled to the countryside for "re-education." When they discover a hidden stash of Western classics in Chinese translation, the boys receive a completely different education from the one they had been expecting.

**Mallasch, K. Paul. *kNewspapers*. New York: CreateSpace, 2012.** A novel that reflects the rise of "citizen journalism," *kNewspapers* tells the story of Paul Malinski's journey from a Webmaster at a midsized newspaper in the Midwest to a man determined to create an independent news outlet from the ground up.



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## NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

**Herumin, Wendy. *Censorship on the Internet: From Filters to Freedom of Speech*.**

**Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers, 2004.** The rise of internet activity has left many wondering how to protect young people from viewing inappropriate material while simultaneously upholding the American ideal of free speech. In *Censorship on the Internet*, Herumin examines the policies and laws involved in this complex issue.

**Zuchora-Walske, Christine. *Internet Censorship: Protecting Citizens or Trampling Freedom?***

**Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2010.** Internet censorship has many well-meaning supporters and dissenters. Though censorship seems like a good way to prevent children from viewing sensitive content, it also seems to infringe on the right to free expression. This title navigates the reader through a history of censorship in the United States since its conception and further expounds the issues surrounding internet censorship in today's society.

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## FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

**Bell, William. *Forbidden City: A Novel of Modern China*.**

**New York, NY: Dell Laurel-Leaf, 1996.** When seventeen-year-old Alex Jackson's father, a news cameraman, suggests that Alex accompany him on a trip to Beijing, China to get footage, it seems like an exciting opportunity. Once in China, Alex is a first-hand witness to the student protestors fighting the Chinese army in Tiananmen Square. When Alex is separated from his father with illegal videotapes on his person, he must rely on the student dissenters to help him escape.

**Diaz, Jorge. *The Rebellious Alphabet*.** New York, Holt,

**1993.** When an illiterate dictator known as the Little General bans reading and writing in his village, a man named Placido spoils his leader's plan of keeping his citizens steeped in ignorance. A story intended for children ages 10 and up, *The Rebellious Alphabet* makes issues such as freedom and censorship accessible to young readers.

