



This insider trashing of IBM reads as fast and as colorfully as a good novel as Carroll dishes out anecdote after racy incident. Unfortunately, in some parts the book is as fictional. Because IBM never "cooperated" with his writing to the extent of providing primary documentation or even verifying information, Carroll pieced together his story mainly from interviews and industry lore.

Given the controversy and reputations riding on the facts, the author had to rely mainly on accounts by outsiders or ex-IBMers that were one-sided, and in many cases, disingenuous, misinformed, or forgetful. The book has an overall "iffy" quality with quoteless quotes, minimum footnotes, leaving most assertions unsubstantiated, and only a dozen books in its bibliography.

Carroll does get most of his facts right, but surprisingly misses some of the more interesting events in his saga. He omits the story of why OS/2 was written in 16-bit code. He neglects most of the international dimensions of IBM or its PC business. He ignores IBM's overall business plans, as he equates the PC business, which represents about a tenth of IBM's revenue, to the success of the entire business. And he never mentions the impact of Warren Buffett or McKinsey & Co. and other outsiders and consulting companies on shaping IBM's actions.

Most importantly, he offers little understanding as to the lessons to be learned from his close observations of IBM over the best part of a decade. The effect is akin to biting a sizzling steak and finding it to be only ground IBM round and Gates hamburger helper.