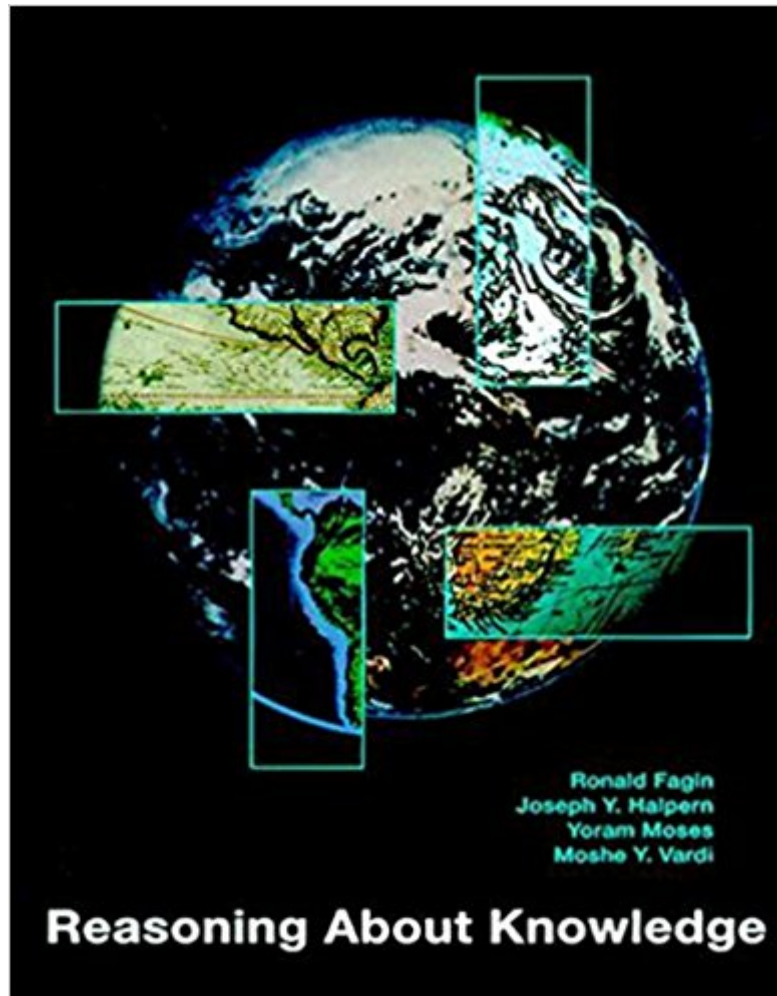




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Reasoning About Knowledge (MIT Press)



Synopsis

Reasoning about knowledge--particularly the knowledge of agents who reason about the world and each other's knowledge--was once the exclusive province of philosophers and puzzle solvers. More recently, this type of reasoning has been shown to play a key role in a surprising number of contexts, from understanding conversations to the analysis of distributed computer algorithms. Reasoning About Knowledge is the first book to provide a general discussion of approaches to reasoning about knowledge and its applications to distributed systems, artificial intelligence, and game theory. It brings eight years of work by the authors into a cohesive framework for understanding and analyzing reasoning about knowledge that is intuitive, mathematically well founded, useful in practice, and widely applicable. The book is almost completely self-contained and should be accessible to readers in a variety of disciplines, including computer science, artificial intelligence, linguistics, philosophy, cognitive science, and game theory. Each chapter includes exercises and bibliographic notes.

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Customer Reviews

A GENERAL REVIEWINTRODUCTIONThis will be an evolving review, starting Mon 12Dec11 as I

work thru reading this book. This current edition is a 2003 paperback, with some revisions from the original 1995 hardcover edition. The 'Look Inside' utility can get interested parties at least to its full table of contents. This book will occasionally be called by its initials 'RAK' in this review.

GENERAL POINTS The nature of this book by four authors is essentially a treatment of 'computational epistemology'. Computational in its technical content of unique kinds of logic and many programming issues, and epistemological in its strong philosophical thread about the theory of knowledge. Terminology commonly refers to 'agents', which can be people, companies, computers on a network, etc. That is clearly an appropriate flexible idea for a book of this nature. Two levels of collective knowledge used in the book are the more straightforward 'distributed knowledge' and the more difficult to attain 'common knowledge'. Those are initially laid out in the first two chapters and are fundamental to RAK. An odd story called 'The Muddy Children Puzzle' is emphasized more than once in the book and has some strange logical complexity. This is a fairly long and wordy book, with final Chapter 11 ending on page 461, for an average of 41.9 pages per chapter, including long sections of rather historical 'notes' as the last thing in each chapter.

DEMOTION On Wed 28Dec11, I demoted this book from 4 stars to 3 stars because of its excessive and gratuitous wordiness. It is as if the authors had to produce over a 500 page book by contract, so they heavily padded out RAK's content, when that much writing was not needed to cover the subjects.

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