Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think

By Viktor Mayer-Schönberger, Kenneth Cukier

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Financial Times **Business Book of the Year Finalist**

"Illuminating and very timely . . . a fascinating — and sometimes alarming — survey of big data's growing effect on just about everything: business, government, science and medicine, privacy, and even on the way we think." —*New York Times*

It seems like "big data" is in the news every day, as we read the latest examples of how powerful algorithms are teasing out the hidden connections between seemingly unrelated things. Whether it is used by the NSA to fight terrorism or by online retailers to predict customers' buying patterns, big data is a revolution occurring around us, in the process of forever changing economics, science, culture, and the very way we think. But it also poses new threats, from the end of privacy as we know it to the prospect of being penalized for things we haven't even done yet, based on big data's ability to predict our future behavior. What we have already seen is just the tip of the iceberg.

Big Data is the first major book about this earthshaking subject, with two leading experts explaining what big data is, how it will change our lives, and what we can do to protect ourselves from its hazards.

"An optimistic and practical look at the Big Data revolution — just the thing to get your head around the big changes already underway and the bigger changes to come."
—Cory Doctorow, boingboing.com

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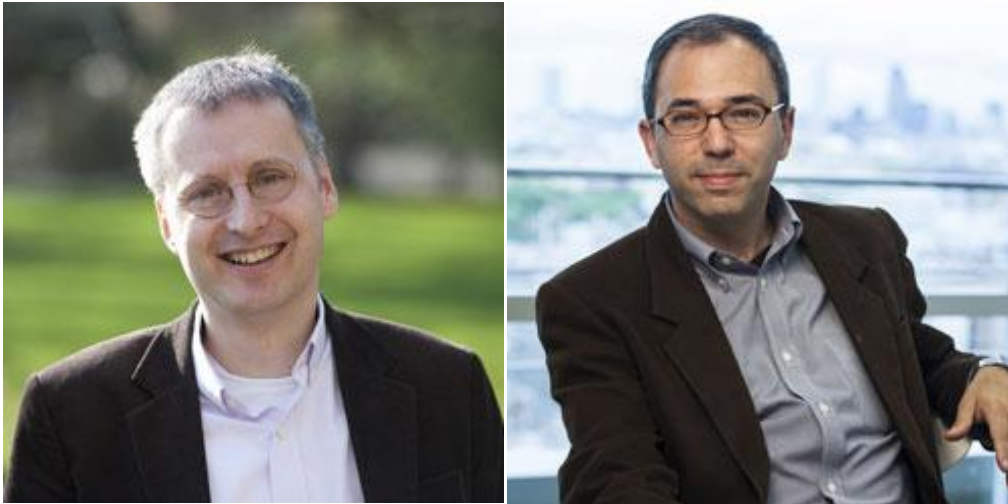- Binding: Paperback
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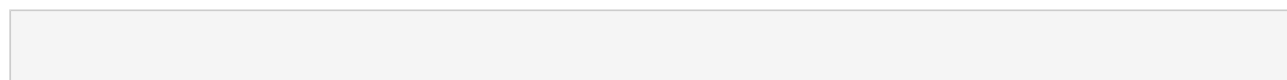
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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Exclusive: Q&A with Kenneth Cukier and Viktor Mayer-Schonberger

Q. What did it take to write *Big Data*?

A. Kenn has written about technology and business from Europe, Asia, and the US for *The Economist*, and is well-connected to the data community. Viktor had researched the information economy as a professor at Harvard and now at Oxford, and his book *Delete* had been well received. So we thought we had a good basis to make a contribution in the area. As we wrote the book, we had to dig deep to find unheard stories about big data pioneers and interview them. We wanted *Big Data* to be about a big idea, but also to be full of examples and success stories -- and be engrossing to read.

Q. Are you big data's cheerleaders?

A. Absolutely not. We are the messengers of big data, not its evangelists. The big data age is happening, and in the book we take a look at the drivers, and big data's likely trajectory: how it will change how we work and live. We emphasize that the fundamental shift is not in the machines that calculate data, but in the data itself and how we use it.

Q. In discovering big data applications, what was your biggest surprise?

A. It is tempting to say that it was predicting exploding manholes, tracking inflation in real time, or how big data saves the lives of premature babies. But the biggest surprise for us perhaps was the very diversity of the uses of big data, and how it already is changing people's everyday world. Many people see big data through the lens of the Internet economy, since Google and Facebook have so much data. But that misses the point: big data is everywhere.

Q. Is *Big Data* then primarily a story about economic efficiency?

A. Big data improves economic efficiency, but that's only a very small part of the story. We realized when talking to dozens and dozens of big data pioneers that it improves health care, advances better education, and helps predict societal change—from urban sprawl to the spread of the flu. Big data is roaring through all sectors of the economy and all areas of life.

Q. So big data offers only "upside"?

A. Not at all. We are very concerned about what we call in our book "the dark side of big data." However the real challenge is that the problem is not necessarily where we initially tend to think it is, such as surveillance and privacy. After looking into the potential misuses of big data, we became much more troubled by "propensity" -- that is, big data predictions being used to police and punish. And by the "fetishization" of data that may occur, whereby organizations may blindly defer to what the data says without understanding its limitations.

Q. What can we do about this "dark side"?

A. Knowing about it is the first step. We thought hard to suggest concrete steps that can be taken to minimize and mitigate big data's risk, and came up with a few ways to ensure transparency, guarantee human free will, and strike a better balance on privacy and the use of personal information. These are deeply serious issues. If we do not take action soon, it might be too late.

From [Booklist](#)
Academic Mayer-Schönberger and editor Cukier consider big data the new ability to crunch vast collections of information, analyze it instantly, and draw conclusions from it. Big data is about predictions: math applied to large quantities of data in order to infer probabilities. Because big data allows us to analyze far more data, we will move beyond expecting exactness and can no longer be fixated on causation. The authors state, The correlations may not tell us precisely why something is happening, but they alert us that it is happening. For individuals, big data risks an invasion of privacy, as vast amounts of personal data are collected and the potential exists to accuse a person of some possible future behavior that has not happened. The authors conclude that big data is a tool that doesn't offer ultimate answers, just good-enough ones to help us now until better methods and hence better answers come along. This book offers important insights and information for many library patrons. --Mary Whaley

Review

"What I'm certain about is that *Big Data* will be the defining text in the discussion for some time to come."
—Forbes.com
"The authors make clear that 'big data' is much more than a Silicon Valley buzzword. . . No other book offers such an accessible and balanced tour of the many benefits and downsides of our continuing infatuation with data."
—*Wall Street Journal*
"Brilliant . . . an elegant and readable primer."
—*New Scientist*
"Plenty of books extol the technical marvels of our information society, but this is an original analysis of the information itself—trillions of searches, calls, clicks, queries and purchases....A fascinating, enthusiastic view of the possibilities of vast computer correlations and the entrepreneurs who are taking advantage of them."
—STARRED *Kirkus Reviews*
"This book offers important insights and information."
—*Booklist*

"'Big data' [is] one of the buzzwords of corporate executives, tech-savvy politicians, and worried civil libertarians. If you want to know what they're all talking about, then BIG DATA is the book for you, a comprehensive and entertaining introduction to a very large topic....Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier offer up some sensible suggestions on how we can have the blessings of big data and our freedoms, too. Just as well; their lively book leaves no doubt that big data's growth spurt is just beginning."
—*Boston Globe*

"Every decade, there are a handful of books that change the way you look at everything. This is one of those books. Society has begun to reckon the change that big data will bring. This book is an incredibly important start."
—Lawrence Lessig, Roy L. Furman Professor of Law, Harvard Law School, and author of Remix and Free Culture

"*Big Data* breaks new ground in identifying how today's avalanche of information fundamentally shifts our basic understanding of the world. Argued boldly and written beautifully, the book clearly shows how companies can unlock value, how policymakers need to be on guard, and how everyone's cognitive models need to change."
—Joi Ito, Director of the MIT Media Lab

"*Big Data* is a must-read for anyone who wants to stay ahead of one of the key trends defining the future of business."
—Marc Benioff, Chairman and CEO, salesforce.com

"An optimistic and practical look at the Big Data revolution — just the thing to get your head around the big changes already underway and the bigger changes to come."
—Cory Doctorow, boingboing.com

"Just as water is wet in a way that individual water molecules aren't, big data can reveal information in a way that individual bits of data can't. The authors show us the surprising ways that enormous, complex, and messy collections of data can be used to predict everything from shopping patterns to flu outbreaks."
—Clay Shirky, author of Cognitive Surplus and Here Comes Everybody

"This brilliant book cuts through the mystery and the hype surrounding big data. A must-read for anyone in business, information technology, public policy, intelligence, and medicine. And anyone else who is just plain curious about the future."
—John Seely Brown, former Chief Scientist, Xerox Corp., and head of Xerox Palo Alto Research Center

"The book teems with great insights on the new ways of harnessing information, and offers a convincing vision of the future. It is essential reading for anyone who uses — or is affected by — big data."
—Jeff Jonas, IBM Fellow & Chief Scientist, IBM Entity Analytics

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Francisco Gentry:

What do you think of book? It is just for students because they're still students or this for all people in the world, what best subject for that? Just simply you can be answered for that query above. Every person has distinct personality and hobby per other. Don't to be pushed someone or something that they don't want do that. You must know how great along with important the book Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think. All type of book are you able to see on many methods. You can look for the internet resources or other social media.

Gladys James:

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Ellen Scherer:

As a pupil exactly feel bored to reading. If their teacher asked them to go to the library or to make summary for some guide, they are complained. Just tiny students that has reading's spirit or real their leisure activity. They just do what the instructor want, like asked to go to the library. They go to at this time there but nothing reading critically. Any students feel that reading is not important, boring in addition to can't see colorful pictures on there. Yeah, it is to get complicated. Book is very important for you personally. As we know that on this time, many ways to get whatever we want. Likewise word says, ways to reach Chinese's country. Therefore , this Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think can make you feel more interested to read.

Brandy Anderson:

What is your hobby? Have you heard that will question when you got college students? We believe that that problem was given by teacher to their students. Many kinds of hobby, Everybody has different hobby. Therefore you know that little person similar to reading or as reading become their hobby. You should know that reading is very important and book as to be the factor. Book is important thing to provide you knowledge, except your own teacher or lecturer. You find good news or update regarding something by book. Many kinds of books that can you take to be your object. One of them is this Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think.

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