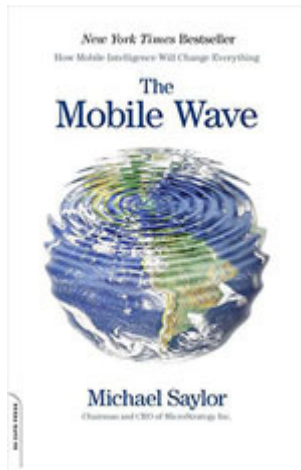


Association Executive Book Shelf Reviews

These reviews are written with Non-Profit Executives in mind. **Book Reviews with a Purpose** can be written for any industry segment or job description.



The Mobile Wave: How Mobile Intelligence Will Change Everything by Michael Saylor

(© 2012, Vanguard Press)

This book is remarkable for how long ago it was written and how accurate its predictions have proved to be. Published in 2012, eons ago in technology terms, Saylor predicts the "dematerialization" of just about everything -- from money to entertainment to publishing to social interactions -- an occurrence catalyzed by the proliferation of mobile devices.

This book shows why it's imperative for associations to be able to conduct all business and interactions with members and donors over mobile devices, especially younger members who have grown up on their mobile phones.



Pitch, Tweet, or engage on the Street by Kara Alaimo
(© 2017, Taylor & Francis)

This is a learned, encyclopedic, practical guide to managing communications in the modern world. Its subtitle is: “How to Practice Global Public Relations and Strategic Communication.” Its author, Kara Alaimo, held a position as a communicator at the United Nations during the Obama administration. She is currently an Assistant Professor and Chair in the Journalism Department at Hofstra University.

This scope of this book is too large and detailed to be covered in one book review. Primarily, it provides deep insights as to how, when and in what format to best communicate your message in different parts of the world under changing circumstances.

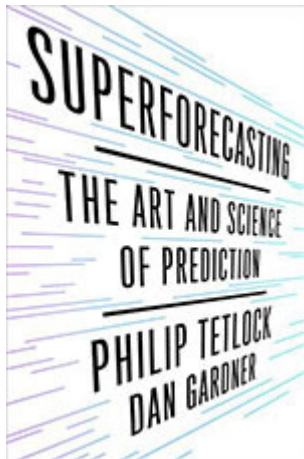
For the space allowed here and the purposes of this column, I choose to put the focus on one chapter, entitled “Global Media and Social Networks.” Here’s a representative sentence: “Don’t just post content: ask your followers questions and respond to their content.”

To make the focus even narrower, it would be wise for leaders of associations interested in increasing engagement through their websites to note these statistics that Alaimo quotes on the subject of video.

She quotes studies that report posting videos increases engagement by 100%, and

that after watching videos, consumers are 85% more likely to make a purchase.

This book is a valuable resource for any organization with a message to communicate, especially those who would benefit from effective, global reach.



Superforecasting: The Art and Science of Prediction by Philip E. Tetlock and Dan Gardner
(©2015 Broadway Books)

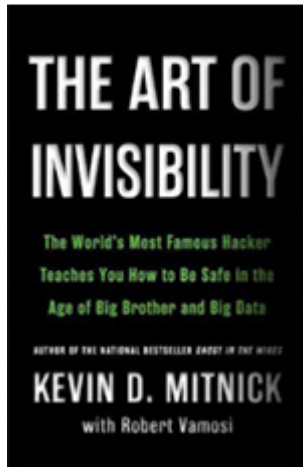
In the early pages of *Superforecasting* by Philip E. Tetlock and Dan Gardner, there is a quotation from Bill Gates, "I have been struck by how important measurement is to improving the human condition." It goes on to say, "You can make incredible progress if you set a clear goal and find a measure that will drive progress towards that goal." Gates then expresses surprise at how few organizations and people do this right.

The superforecasters in this book have a special knack for predicting things with accuracy. "They aren't gurus or oracles... what makes these superforecasters so good... It's not really who they are. It is what they do. Foresight isn't a mysterious gift bestowed at birth. It is the product of particular ways of thinking, of gathering information, of updating beliefs. These habits of thought can be learned and cultivated by any intelligent, thoughtful, determined person."

The authors enlist the phrase "active open-mindedness" to describe the disciplined attitude superforecasters bring to their task. Having the right data is requisite, but translating the data into numbers is what makes thinking explicit. To make estimates with accuracy the forecasters "have to think carefully about how they are thinking, a process known as metacognition."

Anyone who knows the methods stays "mentally active" and assumes the attitude of a "lifelong learner" can produce results. Of the superforecasters, the authors tell us, "The great majority of their forecasts are simply the product of careful thought and measured judgment."

For organizations of any kind, including Not-for-Profits, the most important data to predict is your own, which brings us back to the Bill Gates quote about setting goals and measuring. This month's companion book review shows how forecasting principles apply directly to the goal of organizational improvement.



The Art of Invisibility

by Kevin Mitnick with Robert Vamosi

(Published by Little, Brown and Company)

This is the most useful book I've read in a long time. Useful and timely, considering the preponderance of news and justified concern about cyber security. Most of that news has to do with institutions protecting the data in their care, certainly something of overriding importance for non-profit organizations of all kinds whose survival depends on the trust their members and donors have put in them.

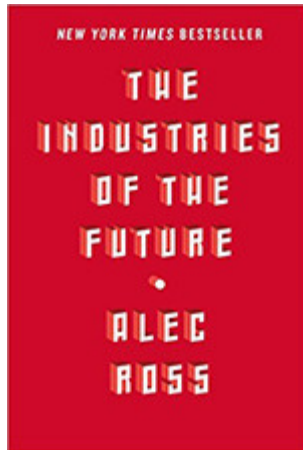
"The Art of Invisibility" focuses on you, the individual. The author makes you aware of how every move you make on the internet is being tracked, and what steps you can take to protect your privacy.

I once taught a class with the title, "How to Use the Internet to Make a Difference in Your Life." Never before in history has so much knowledge been so accessible to so many, but included in that accessible knowledge is you, everything you care about, everything you explore, who makes up your life, what you shared yesterday. I would remind my class that using the internet without the right precautions was like sending messages on postcards available for the postman and everyone else in between to read.

Among the author's recommendations will be using passwords of 25 characters or more. He shows you how in settings to increase the number of digits required to unlock your phone. He gives you strategies for answering those security questions that will make life harder for any hacker. He explains the importance and vulnerabilities of 2FA security strongly urged by your bank and others these days. He names apps you can download to encrypt your messages and achieve what he calls "Pretty Good Privacy." He offers cautions about syncing all of your devices especially when some of them are in the hands of other family members, with colorful stories about unintended consequences. He tells you about a search engine that does not track your searches. Above all, he wants you to realize that the cell phone you carry around is "essentially a tracking device."

There's much more to this book, including explanations about how things happen, like the recent vulnerability of so many celebrity photos that dominated a week of news, or how programs that dynamically track traffic patterns do it, or why an email you may be sending to someone in the next town may pass through several servers in foreign countries and how that impacts your security.

Usually, I give the subhead along with first mention of the title, but in this case it's so long it deserves a paragraph of its own, and serves as a suitable summary of the book's contents: "The World's Most Famous Hacker Teaches You How to Be Safe in the Age of Big Brother and Big Data."



The Industries of the Future

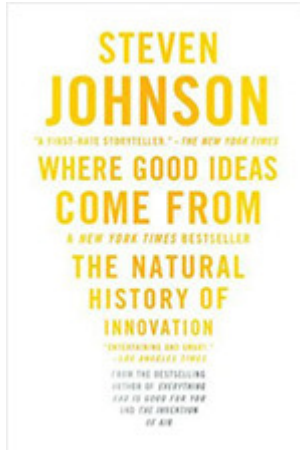
by Alec Ross. Published by Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2016.

A few pages into "The Industries of the Future" I checked its publication date because its description of the effects of globalization and innovation seemed so prescient. It was written in 2016.

Alec Ross brings a raft of credentials to the horizon he explores. Ever mindful that "innovation brings both promise and peril," the author makes it abundantly clear that every group will not benefit from inevitable change. He brackets his argument with sentences like this: "If you can imagine an advance, somebody is already working on how to develop and commercialize it."

With good reason, workforce development and membership roles are subjects that dominate discussions in association boardrooms. Of all those affected by the swirl of dramatic change in store, one group is entirely voluntary -- those who take the time to understand what's happening. This book is a great first step for association C-Level executives interested in doing due diligence on the future of the organizations they lead.

Ross examines the ever-expanding roles robots will play, how new generations of computer code will be built on genetic code, the weaponization of the Internet ("Cold War" into "Code War"), how data is increasingly the raw material of the future, how new compacts of trust need to be written between corporations, citizens, and governments.



Where Good Ideas Come From: the Nature and History of Innovation
By Steven Johnson. Published by Riverhead Books, 2010

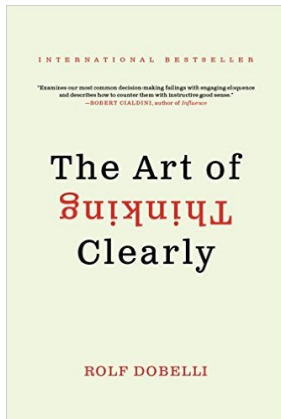
It's no surprise that Steven Johnson, author of several, dynamic classics in contemporary thinking, treats this elusive subject in an insightful, unsentimental way. You can hear echoes of principles found in another of his works -- Emergence -- about how critical mass and proximity alter the nature of interactions. Johnson challenges with authority romantic notions of breakthroughs as sudden events unique to the individual who articulates one of them at a certain moment in time.

Rather, the author presents the case for types of environments that encourage creativity. This prescription should be uplifting for all kinds of organizations, especially associations whose very existence is centered on drawing diverse people together around a single focus. The traditional mandate that an association strive to remain the primary source of information for its members or donors should be expanded to include becoming the primary inspiration for meaningful breakthroughs that advance the industry or search at its core.

The time is right. As Johnson points out the 10/10 rule of past decades, that a new invention took 10 years to develop and another 10 years to be understood and accepted by the populace, has been shrunk in our internet age sometimes to a 1/1 rule. At the same time, the author cautions that everything is not possible. He explains "the adjacent possible" how out of the scraps of existing elements and ideas, new formulations emerge. But new formulations create new scraps out of which even newer ideas will

emerge. Organizations of all kinds, especially associations, are urged to foster an environment of openness and continuous learning to remain relevant. It's not an option. It's a requirement.

In all of this mix, there are guidelines for how organizations and individuals can comport themselves to retain identity and remain on the right side of change, often by loosening the grip of the past.



The Art of Thinking Clearly

by Rolf Dobelli (Published by Harper Collins, 2013).

Reviewed by Raphael Badagliacca

The first duty of any leader is to think clearly. This book explores 99 ways that humans are predisposed to think in muddled ways, draw inaccurate conclusions, and act accordingly. I guarantee that some of these thinking biases will be familiar to you. Many of them were to me. And once you have the author's clarifications in mind, they will naturally come into play when you are about to make the next decision.

Here are some of my favorites:

- **Clustering Illusion:** why you see shapes in the clouds.
- **Availability Bias:** why we prefer a wrong map to none at all.
- **Sunk Cost Fallacy:** why you should forget the past.
- **Groupthink:** the calamity of conformity.
- **Not-Invented Here Syndrome:** don't think nothing can beat what we create ourselves.
- **Social Proof Bias:** don't credit the herd instinct.
- **Confirmation Bias:** don't interpret data to support preconceived notions.

- **Hindsight Bias:** don't get lulled into thinking you are a better predictor than you are.
- **Overconfidence Effect:** don't overestimate the knowledge and abilities of "experts."
- **Incentive Super- Response Tendency:** don't pay by the hour... self-interest rules.
- **Outcome Bias:** don't judge a decision purely by its outcome.
- **Liking Bias:** don't choose suppliers on how much you like them or how much they seem to like you.
- **Endowment Effect:** don't cling to things.
- **Coincidence:** don't get taken in by the seeming inevitability of unlikely events.

... plus much, much more.

This is an eye-opening work for anyone whose primary job is to make decisions, and that clearly includes executives charged with leading their non-profit organizations to fulfill their missions.

The Human Face of Big Data

by Rick Smolan and Jennifer Er Witt

(Published by Against All Odds Productions, 2012).



It makes sense that a book about big data would be a big book. "The Human Face of Big Data" is not the usual coffee-table size book, big on graphics and short on substance. On the contrary, this 11x14 volume is encyclopedic on the subject. It gets across with indelible examples that big data not only is more data than could be imagined at any time prior to recent years, but that its compilation and analysis happens in such rapid

fashion that patterns previously hidden are revealed. In other words, not only is there more of it, but its patterns of meaning has been unlocked. This means that problems that have seemed insoluble may now have solutions, and actions can be made to happen remotely and automatically in ways that were previously the province of science fiction.

The prime examples are in medical data and genetic research, but big data has impact in virtually every field. To leaders of associations, it is worthwhile to understand its role in marketing outreach, for what it reveals about the online behavior of members and donors, including prospects you are trying to attract. Your association has a focus. You strengthen the fulfillment of your mandate to remain the primary source of information for your constituents by understanding how big data is changing their daily lives, professional and personal, and transforming the pursuits of their companies.

I'm amused by telling observations like this – that what we are doing with social media apps like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others – is giving ourselves electronic tattoos. Of course, as with all advances, there is a dark side to all of this, with consequences for personal privacy.

Consider these facts:

1. From the beginning of recorded time until 2003 we created 5 exabytes of data. In 2011, the same amount of data was created every two days. Since 2013, that time has shrunk to 10 minutes.
2. Data is an economic asset. "Data is the new oil" is a now famous formulation.
3. 60% of all humans text. In 2010, 193,000 texts were sent every second.
4. There are more bits of data than stars in the universe.
5. There are 133 million blogs on the web.
6. 80% of humans have a mobile phone.
7. In one second of a baseball game, more data is now captured than in entire seasons only a few years ago.

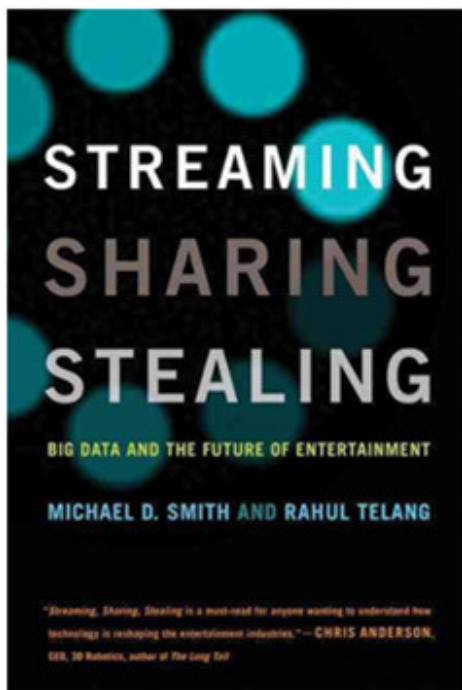
Esther Dyson's insightful essay in this book, "The Pulse of the Planet" tracks the stages in the rise of big data and the transformation of our lives: 1) how the internet and web connects us; 2) how the proliferation of devices spreads intelligence; and 3) how analog sensory devices have been newly empowered.

In an essay called "A Demographic of One" whose title itself reminds us that today we

can now know the people we are trying to impress, instruct, and engage as individuals through the management of data is an important fact for leaders of non-profit organizations.

As Michael Malone write, "Big data is truly revolutionary because it fundamentally changes mankind's relationship with information."

This is worth noting, understanding and making it the basis of action.



Streaming, Sharing, Stealing: Big Data and the Future of Entertainment
by Michael D. Smith and Rahul Telang (Published by Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2016).

I did not have to read very far into this book to find its relevance for any organization involved in communicating with a purpose, which is all organizations, especially those whose primary product is information, for example, organizations like yours. The goal of an association or fundraising organization, built around a single focus, is to keep its position as the main source of information for that focus -- the industry or pursuit it serves. To do so, it's not enough to have more and better content than anyone else.

You must also make it accessible in contemporary formats.

Enter the story of Netflix's risky decision to move from distributor of content in a physical format to owner/streamer of content.

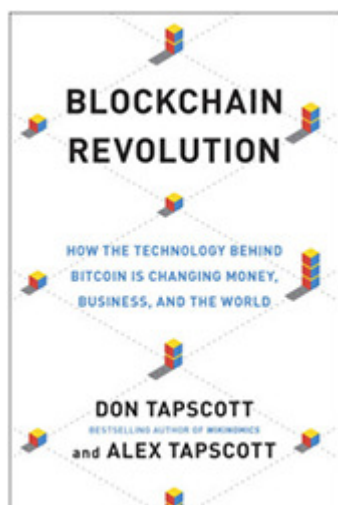
The “pilot episode” has long been the standard way that television networks try to assess new shows. The cost for your typical pilot is around \$5 million. Its role is to get across in a 30- or 60-minute time frame (minus commercial time) the story arc, plot, and characters of the intended broadcast series.

When Netflix announced that it was entering the content business with a \$100 million investment in House of Cards, and making the entire first season’s episodes available all at once, media experts and bankers expressed grave doubts.

In an observation made by Kevin Spacey, House of Cards is a long, multi-layered, complex story whose essence could not be expressed in a pilot. In other words, the content is rich and engaging like yours should be, more than can be captured in a single interaction. When Netflix’s Chief Content Officer came to the table to do his analysis, he did not bring a history of what has traditionally worked in terms of plot and character in television, he brought actual customer data. Netflix knew how many of its customers had rented DVDs by the intended director of the series, how many had rented DVDs with the actors who portrayed the main characters, how many had rented movies with similar subject matter. What seemed like a risky decision was actually grounded in the reality of meaningful data.

Netflix had a historical database with the preferences of its customers, and made a data-driven decision, then took it one step further, by creating different trailers for the same show for customers who fell into different preference groups. In short, Netflix knew its customers individually and drew upon that source to create different, suitable content.

This is what you need to do with your members and donors.



Blockchain Revolution: How the Technology Behind Bitcoin is Changing Money, Business and the World

by Dan Tapscott and Alex Tapscott (Published by Penguin Random House LLC, 2016)

Reviewed by Raphael Badagliacca

If you're like me, when there's a lot of talk about something you don't quite understand, especially something being presented as a game-changer, it becomes time to start doing a little research.

Just looking at this collection of 2017 book reviews, several arcs become apparent. One of them goes this way: *Sapiens* made us aware of the importance of storytelling, not just as entertainment, but as the very thing that separates us from other forms of life, including previous human species. It is strategic and the basis of civilization. Without agreed-upon, shared fictions, there is no civilization, and the biggest of those fictions is money.

A second arc goes this way: *The Mobile Wave* made it clear to us that the continued proliferation of smart phones would catalyze the internet and further at an increasingly rapid pace the dematerialization of virtually everything, especially money. The history of money as told in *The Ascent of Money* by Niall Ferguson traces a path we all know well, from precious metals to paper money to credit cards to electronic transfers. Beginning with paper money, all of these transactions require an intermediary – a bank, or a credit card company, or an entity like PayPal. Blockchain technology removes the middleman from financial transactions in more disruptive fashion than Uber and Airbnb do to their

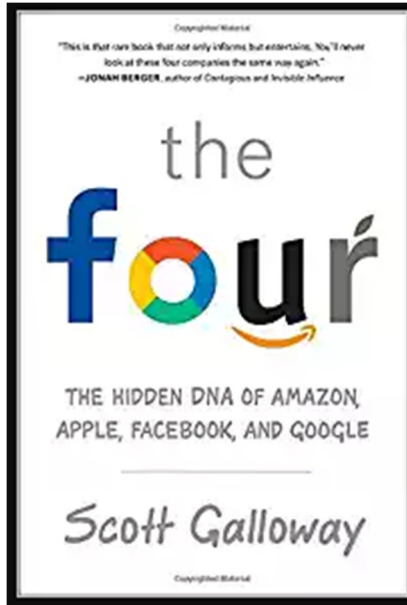
exchange of services, because with Uber and Airbnb you still have Uber and Airbnb.

Blockchain Technology in its purest expression is a true peer-to-peer network with no intermediaries. Ironically, it returns us to a time when there were local currencies before central banks, or banks of any kind. This is what has the banks scrambling to set up their own private blockchain networks, which would, of course, upend the idea. It's also what has certain governments outlawing cryptocurrencies, buying time while they figure out how to control them.

In this book, you will explore with new eyes concepts like the distributed ledger, provenance, and privacy. At times, the authors become evangelical about how blockchain can fix the inequities of the internet. Despite bad actors who have tarnished the image of cryptocurrencies, that has not seemed to slow down the activity, the interest of traditional institutions, or the millions of dollars being invested. Blockchain will change something. Whether that change is as pervasive as these authors think it can be, it is certainly worth your time to understand something about it.

I also recommend the documentary, Banking on Bitcoin, for anyone who has Netflix.

The Four: The Hidden DNA of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google by Scott Calloway



There are so many insights in this book that it's hard to know where to begin. They are delivered in a conversational style by an author who quickly wins our trust by the quality of his observations. Isn't that what all authors do, or try to do, you might ask. Not really. Not when the writer's chosen mission is to evaluate the consequences of the "advances" in technology through which we are living. Many just stoke the hype. This book even-handedly analyzes the four giants in the subtitle, how they became who they are and what it all means to us. Leaders of organizations of any kind will find here a new understanding of the familiar landscape in which their constituents live.

This is a data story. The author deftly contrasts newspapers with Google. Both have customers. But Google, of course, knows much more about its customers than newspapers that gather little more than name and address and possibly change of address. Media revenue is important, but knowing the detailed habits of media consumers is more important. Consider how much Facebook knows about the people who use it. Most products humans have known through history become less valuable as they are used - they get used up - but not data products. Data products become more valuable the more they are used - dynamically, automatically.

At heart, we remain hunters and gatherers. Efficiency in hunting and gathering appeals to our evolutionary selves. It's what makes Amazon the earth's largest store. Does Amazon mean the death of the store? Not so fast. It may mean the death of old retail ways, but there are certain products that people want to touch and see close up. Amazon has begun to invest in brick and mortar. The author observes that when a

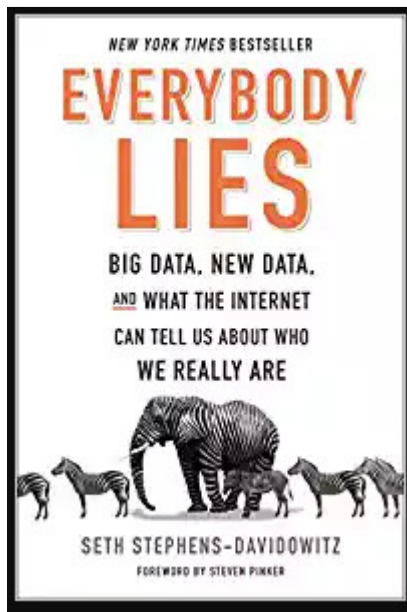
brand creates its own store that structure becomes a temple for worshippers. Voila the Apple stores deliberately built out of see-through materials so that passersby can gaze at the worshippers attended by a priestly class of tech experts. Products are displayed under glass, reinforcing the age-old identification of Apple with luxury product lines that express style. Apple may be the only supplier of technology that crosses generational divides.

Amazon's core competence is storytelling. By painting a picture of the future, it has been able to upend traditional notions of what it means to be a business success. These are stories that individual investors have found compelling, despite traditional measures. So has all of Wall Street. Continued storytelling and a heavy investment in robotics spell Amazon's future.

Why did Google succeed so famously over other search engines? The notion that search results were unaffected by advertising, in other words, that an all-knowing Google would tell you the objective truth. Searches are like prayers to a God that always gives answers.

This is a valuable read for any organizational leader.

Everybody Lies: Big Data, New Data, and What the Internet Can Tell Us About Who We Really Are by Seth Stephens-Davidowitz



Follow the data. That's what this nearly 400-page book is telling us to do. And it will take you places it never has before. "Google searches," the author states, "are the most important dataset ever collected on the human psyche." There is a crossover point where big data becomes new data and this is where the author's interest lies. That was a playful un-pun on the title. The author's conviction is that while people say one thing they reveal their true interests by what they search for. In other words, while their words may lie, their searches do not. He calls this the digital truth serum.

New data then is what big data can reveal today. The author, who calls himself a data journalist, writes, "I have come to believe that the new data available in our digital age will radically expand our understanding of humankind." If it can do that, just imagine what it will tell and Executive Director or a Membership Director about your current membership and those you are trying to reach.

At different points, the author will move from the mild "data plays an important role in all of our lives" to the radical "everything is data." He assures you that "You are a data scientist" and that you have been one from your earliest days. He shows how data analysis can answer questions like "Are Freudian slips real?" By doing big data analysis on words, he'll interpret how men and women use words differently, and what signals on a first date whether the parties involved want there to be a second date. He'll reveal political trends by telling us what big data reveals about geographical areas with statistics on seemingly unrelated searches that their populations tend to make.

Sometimes it's easier to be more truthful to a stranger than someone with whom you have history. Internet users regularly reveal the truth about themselves without inhibition by the questions they put in the search bar, the ultimate anonymous stranger.

Big data in the author's final analysis has finally turned social science into a real science. Why not put this science to work for you?