

Making Sense of **Brontobytes**

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Data has to be processed, stored, analyzed, and visualized to have any meaning, according to *Think Bigger* author Mark Van Rijmenam. But how can that happen when data has become so large that we have outgrown the metric system for naming the size of data stores?

This book takes a step-by-step, understandable approach for understanding data that is “so vast that we are not able to ask the right questions to find the right answers.” It explains what big data is, provides examples of how organizations can and have benefitted from it, and offers a big data roadmap for implementing suggested ideas. The book leaves us with a vision of the not-so-distant future when, with the right tools and strategies, big data will be called simply “data” once again.

Useful Features

Assembled in a well-organized and easy-to-follow format, the book contains several valuable features. The seven-page glossary includes technical terms related to analytics, data

size, business, and consumers. For example, it says a *brontobyte*, “the size of the digital universe tomorrow,” equates to 1,000 yottabytes (1 quadrillion gigabytes). Notes for every chapter show a significant amount of research. Key points are re-emphasized in “takeaways” at the end of each chapter. Case studies interspersed throughout are short, specific, and used to illustrate points such as how big data is used to enhance security.

One large chapter devoted to big data by industry includes agriculture, automotive, education, energy, financial services, gaming, health care, legal, manufacturing, not-for-profit, media and entertainment, oil and gas, public sector, retail, telecom, transportation, and travel and leisure. Taking a “With big data, almost anything is possible” stance, the author suggests that many more industries could benefit by using big data creatively.

The author also provides advice for small and medium-sized enterprises. He identifies opportunities for leveraging smaller volumes of data to bring about big data opportunities. He also discusses how small data can become big data by combining datasets and formats.

Limitations of the Book

The inordinate amount of time spent discussing sales and marketing and the retail implications of big data was offputting. This focus gives insight into how much time and money companies invest in analyzing consumer buying habits but distracts from the discussions about the collaborative use of data.

I also found the discussion under “Big Data and Its Impact on Human Resources” more than a little creepy, especially when the author declares

Think Bigger: Developing a Successful Big Data Strategy for Your Business

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that “with Big Data, organizations can create better and happier employees.” The author makes some big leaps in his conclusions about the value of using big data in this context. The book also has a skewed view of data ownership when considered from a records manager point of view.

Of Particular Interest

In addition to the items mentioned above, the book covers multiple topics that will be of interest to records managers, including: “Big Data Privacy, Ethics, and Security”; “Big Data Governance”; “Key Characteristics of Information Centric Organizations”; “Legacy Systems and Big Data”; and “The Big Data Roadmap.”

Overall Evaluation

I would recommend this book as an interesting read that is outstanding in presenting concepts and clarifying jargon. It provides a good framework for big data discussions. It also moves beyond talking about volumes of data to discussing how that data can be used in decision making and improving the financial position of a company. **END**

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