

that further constitute that user, or his datafied answers.”

He shrewdly contemplates resistance to algorithmic control of our lives through an endorsement of Helen Nissenbaum’s technique of obfuscation involving “the ‘deliberate addition of ambiguous, confusing, or misleading information to interfere with surveillance and data collection.’” Obfuscation, in other words, means feeding an algorithmic system

incorrect or extraneous data to compromise its subsequent control over you and others.

### Essential Reading for Info Pros

*We Are Data* is an important contribution to greater understanding of algorithmic identification, regulation, and surveillance. Cheney-Lippold expertly shows how “as everything we do becomes datafied, everything we do becomes controllable.” It clearly

describes a complex and often murky situation supported by thorough research. Indeed, the research alone is highly informative and instructive. The book further presents both conceptual analyses of and practical discussions on the implications of how our data is made useful for others. It is essential reading for anyone interested in information and its philosophy, creation, management, surveillance, and other uses.



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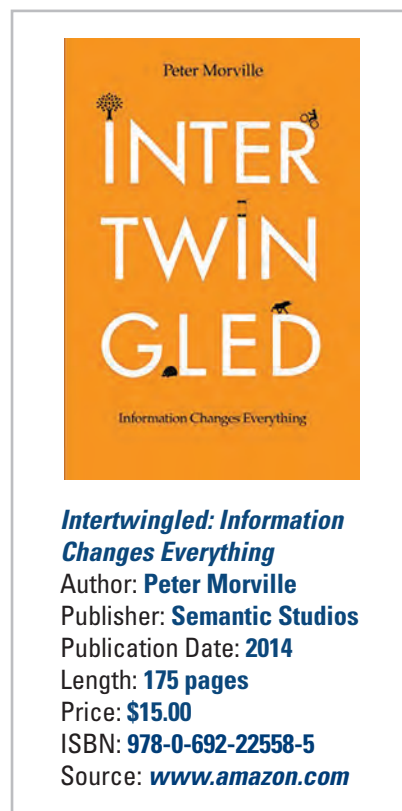
## ‘Untwirling’ Information Structures

Allan Thompson

**I**ntertwined: *Information Changes Everything*, by Peter Morville, sets out to refresh the way information professionals and business professionals approach working with information systems. Morville’s argument is that information within organizations is deeply “intertwined.” He does not, however, provide an explicit definition of what it means to be intertwined and instead maps the concept through the book’s four parts. Each part examines a different aspect of how behaviors, culture, and assumptions shape the way we interact with information. The implicit point is that all these elements are related – simultaneously intertwined and mingled.

### Defining ‘Intertwined’

Intertwined, it should be noted, is not Morville’s term but one coined in 1974 by Ted Nelson in a book about digital systems design. More interesting still is Morville’s involvement in establishing the concept of information architecture, along with Richard Wurman and Lou Rosenfeld.



This is important to appreciating Morville’s argument and a concept

he takes some time to flesh out: systems design, analysis, and building inventories and taxonomies are all architecture, making intertwined a nice, tight term for much of the work information management (IM) professionals do.

*Intertwined* has five sections: “Nature,” “Categories,” “Connections,” “Culture,” and “Limits.” The first three of these will be most familiar to IM professionals; they are illustrated organically through examples from nature, giving the work a solid foundation and metaphor to rest on: the similarities between an ecosystem and information system provide an unconventional perspective. Morville’s examples here and elsewhere incisively lay out a discussion of how best to disrupt an ecosystem – animal or informational.

### Appealing to IM Pros

Morville’s book is not a technical work but implicates the reader on equal terms as an information architect. While the work would be a good read for anyone interested in ways to

approach information, the issues and approaches are specific enough to the IM profession to be most appealing to that audience.

Morville's rhetorical style is thoughtful, metonymically following its argument with the examples it provides between daily life and the business, leaving the Nelson quote in the preface constantly in the back of the reader's mind: "Everything [Morville's book, too] is deeply intertwined." The work is also literary and worldly, referencing philosopher Martin Heidegger, novelist E.M. Forster, and poet Robert Frost. This approach is refreshing because it prevents the reader from getting lost too deeply down a technical rabbit hole through some of his more complicated arguments.

These asides also give some credibility to his claim that information architecture is (or *should be*, as explored in the section called "Limits") platform-agnostic. The majority of Morville's career is deeply intertwined with web design, and so he draws on examples from that domain. If any idea is underdeveloped in the work, it is this one about the need for platform-agnostic information architecture. Despite technology being the dominant force in IM, it is an interesting thing to wonder what, if anything, might supersede filing cabinets and file servers.

### Using Software Development Methods

In the section titled "Culture," Morville gives significant attention to the way information architecture impacts users. The examples he uses are meaningful, citing one earlier about the resistance of older managers toward social media. To this end, Morville discusses such project management methodologies as agile and waterfall, both drawn from software development.

He also spends time on the idea of minimum viable product (MVP) – something unlikely to be familiar to those with a more traditional IM background, but a somewhat attractive framework for those tackling the implementation of a new enterprise content management system. Though attractively packaged, MVP is not exactly a ground-breaking or foreign idea for IM; limited user testing for analog and digital systems is well established. The difference is that MVP seems to swap user testing for early release and tweaking.

### Guiding Users to Information

Some of Morville's most thought-provoking writing is in "Connections." He contrasts the early aspirations of the Internet's pioneers with the reality. The shortcoming of current connections to information, Morville says – espe-

cially on the Internet – are links, which suffer from being linear. This is to say that because links point in a single direction, which Morville seems to allow, they are a risk but not a critical failure; he sees potential in loops instead. If indecisive, this discussion still provides fodder for more deeply confronting the ways which IM professionals map and guide users to information in their day-to-day work, and how both could be done better.

### Interwingling New Thinking

Morville's work is compelling because it confronts existential issues of IM. This confrontation is useful, especially to the younger professional, as a reminder that even if mediums change, the message should not. Thoughtful planning and analysis are the ways to effective solutions, intertwined all the while with new ways of thinking about problems that will continue to confront IM professionals regardless of the medium. **E**



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