

Bib Data Shocks: An Introduction to Big Data for Librarians and Information Professionals [book review]

By: [Mark Schumacher](#)

Schumacher, Mark. (2019). Bib Data Shocks: An Introduction to Big Data for Librarians and Information Professionals [book review]. *Technical Services Quarterly*. 36(4), 424-425.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07317131.2019.1664119>

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Technical Services Quarterly* on 07 October 2019, available online:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/07317131.2019.1664119>

*****© 2019 Mark Schumacher. Reprinted with permission. This version of the document is not the version of record. *****

Abstract:

This book is approximately the 40th volume in the LITA (Library Information Technology Association) Guides series which dates back to 2007. The author, a digital services librarian at California State University, Northridge, explains the diverse elements of “big data” and the roles that libraries can play as the use of such data evolves.

Keywords: book reviews | big data | libraries

Article:

Bib Data Shocks: An Introduction to Big Data for Librarians and Information Professionals by Andrew Weiss, Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 2018, 218 pp., \$90.00 (Hardback), ISBN: 978-1-5381-0322-7, \$45.00 (Paperback), ISBN: 978-1-5381-0323-4, \$42.50 (E-book), ISBN: 978-1-5381-0324-1

This book is approximately the 40th volume in the LITA (Library Information Technology Association) Guides series which dates back to 2007. The author, a digital services librarian at California State University, Northridge, explains the diverse elements of “big data” and the roles that libraries can play as the use of such data evolves.

The book is divided into four sections reflecting the book’s title: “First Shocks,” “Reality Shocks,” “Library Shocks,” and “Future Shocks.” Many issues concerning these various shocks are addressed: the causes for the growth of big data, the various uses of big data by businesses and the government, the importance of privacy and the threats to individuals’ privacy from big data. The author rightly describes the situation as a “pervasive surveillance culture” (p. 92).

Among other things, the book points out the improper or illegal collecting of many kinds of information, such as the curious situation where refrigerators can gather data when the owner uses it! Other topics discussed include Julian Assange and Wikileaks, the various definitions of

information overload, and ways that libraries can try to deal with it. The author also pays attention to the “big data” that libraries themselves collect, such as information about the searching patterns in the online catalog and other databases, which can potentially guide librarians making decisions concerning acquiring new resources and redesigning the library’s website for more efficient searching.

Late in the book, the author summarizes the goal of the work: examining “how generating vast amounts of information impacts the decisions people must make in order to handle it.” (p. 163) The complex evolution of data’s place in universities and thus in libraries has led to the creation of library positions focused on dealing with this material, sometimes called a “databrarian.” The author also links data to the growing open access movement and the planning and managing of those materials. The final two chapters, which explore the future roles of librarians in a growing “big data world,” are an excellent conclusion to the text.

At times, the text is challenging to read. Early on, there is this description: “data is very much an ontological assertion of existence dependent upon physical, temporal, and cultural contexts, and buttressed by the assumption that something can be learned or derived from the universe.” (p. 11) There are some small items that should be corrected if possible. The bibliographies at the end of chapters often provide minimal details of the references: simply the website of a publication, such as *Forbes Magazine* or the *New York Times*, is inadequate. (Occasionally the reader following the reference reaches a page to purchase the item in question.) There are a few inaccurate statements: the FBI was not founded “in the late nineteenth century” (p. 83) but in 1908.

All that being said, this is a useful introduction to a group of subjects that will continue to become more important in the library world, particularly in academic libraries.