



## BOOK REVIEW

### **Big Data**

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This is the review of the book titled “Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work and Think” written by Viktor Mayer-Schoenberger and Kenneth Cukier. The book was published by John Murray (Publishers) in 2013.

The book begins its first chapter by telling a story how Google outclassed the government agency in prediction the spread of flu in the United States. The key is at massive mathematically modeling using the so called “Big data”. The definition of big data given by the authors is “*the ability of society to harness information in novel ways to produce useful insights or goods and services of significant value*”.

Later, the authors tell another story of Oren Etzioni who pioneered the data mining of the price of air ticket and scaled up the project into a business called “Farecast”. The business not only predicts the price of air tickets but also extends its service to prices of differentiated products with different prices such as concert tickets, used cars and hotel rents. It aims to answer the customers “To buy or not to buy” the tickets or the products by prediction the trend of the prices and compare to the prices of other choices. The precision of the prediction is around 75% which may be viewed as a benchmark for any prediction of our works.

These activities are possible in modern days because of the availability of “Big data”. The data changes the way researchers collect, store and manager the information. It relates the data to the probability of occurring of a specific event. It does not answer “*why*” the event does occur but figure out “*what*” event will occur. It changes the way that researchers think about the data; *let the data “speak to you”*.

The book predicts that social science will be shaken dramatically by big data. Data sampling will be replaced by the collection of big data via internet or online devices. The size of the data is not just at gigabytes; it is at least at terabytes or even over an exabyte which is one billion gigabytes. The real time data will make the research in social science not static any more. The knowledge will evolve very fast which captures the evolution of consumers and people. Our knowledge will be obsolete if we ignore the use of big data in our research.

The authors mention that big data is stored in a lot of servers around the world. I doubt whether we have a server for big data in our university. If no, we should think of having the first one and how to create the flow to the big data into this storage. After that, we have to think to use our supercomputer to process the data in such a way to know something from them. This is a big challenge for the next decade of research in our university. Unless we capture the trend of big data, we cannot move forward to the world class in doing research.

In conclusion, the book does very well in motivate researchers to think of the big data and concerns using them in doing research. Even though it does not provide technical matters how to master the management and analysis of big data, it provides the principles of the big data with various and fascinating examples of their applications to change the facets of the world. I was the one who could not sit still after finishing reading the book. Immediately, I was drafting a proposal for the establishment of a research unit that focuses and works on big data in my faculty. We cannot walk out of this field because it really means the walking out of our research business.

#### REFERENCES

- Mayer-Schoenberger, Viktor and Kenneth Cukier. 2013. **Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work and Think**. London: John Murray (Publishers).