

Feinberg, Melanie. [Everyday adventures with unruly data](#). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2022. xii, 318 p. ISBN 978-0-262-54440-5. \$35.00.

Melanie Feinberg has written this book on unruly data during her sabbatical in Denmark. This is a high quality outcome of the sabbatical work and shows that her time in Copenhagen was not wasted. The book embodies her passion for human side of knowledge organisation, which at present is becoming more and more computerised and seemingly formulaic. She demonstrates the fallacy of the assumptions about objectivity of data and facts and does it in a most persuasive and engaging way. The title includes two engaging words adventure and unruly and two 'boring' ones everyday and data. Their combination creates persuasive message that it is worth reading the book. Even if it may be a successful marketing trick, the expectations will not be deceived.

The main subject of the book relates to the core of information sciences - knowledge organisation, including classification and other data structuring means, and information behaviour in relation to these means and the processes of classifying, grouping or stereotyping. The book addresses the issue of how our human thinking, that is always subjective, influences even the most precise data, such as measurements of height or weight or produced by technical equipment, and ties them into the human contexts, especially, our everyday life in particular places.

The whole text is structured in seven chapters, each devoted to a particular topic relating to data: serendipity, objectivity, equivalence, interoperability, taxonomy, labelling, and locality. Each chapter starts with everyday experiences with data based on the events of personal life of the author, lending not only authenticity of the presented stories, but also creating certain intimacy involving the reader. I imagine, that it will also make readers look into their own current of everyday events looking for similar occurrences. I could not test this on myself as I was involved in teaching similar subjects and obviously many of us (meaning lecturers of these subjects) exploit personal experiences for this end. But exploiting everyday phenomena, such as shoe shapes, junk drawers, butter, cookies and mints, cooking

and race labels, for writing a serious academic monograph turned out to be a fruitful idea, though it is a quite unexpected move.

Personal experiences are balanced with reflection part in each chapter. Reflections are focused on some particular problem showing the tension arising from our own expectations of how data, systems, computation or other knowledge management tools should function and the messy human reality that interferes with their presumed objectivity, functionality and omnipresence. I enjoyed both parts in every chapter, but especially how they relate to each other and how they raise even more questions that the author herself voices.

I have been especially captured by the stories from the teaching practice of Melanie Feinberg. These stories have confirmed that students and teachers share similar features on both sides of Atlantic and move through similar stages in developing their professional understanding from clearly cut assumptions and omniscience to fuzziness, ambiguity and permanent discovery of their own humanity. My own experience of these two stages can be illustrated by a meeting between the students and a famous media professor Dennis McQuail. The students could not hide their disappointment with the guest, who instead of giving one correct answer to questions, started relating questions to different perspectives that would produce different answers or rather would raise further questions. Professors should know better, should'n they?

To my greatest surprise, I found myself reading the comments to the main text with the greatest interest. In most cases, I was wondering why this material was not included in the main text and still cannot find a good explanation for these author's decisions. On the other hand, that may also be a demonstration of our humanity and subjective understanding of what fits where.

It is worth mentioning the illustrations to the text, that are quite sparse, but mainly to the point and very interesting. I would have liked to see more of those, even if I had to go the digital representations of the paintings on the internet to see their colours.

I would recommend the book to all students and teachers, researchers and professionals of library and information science, information studies, data and computer scientists, but I think it has enough potential to attract wider audience interested in how we make sense of our world.

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