

Kazakoff, Miro. [Persuading with data: a guide to designing, delivering, and defending your data](#). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2022. 187 p. ISBN 978-0-2625-4327-9. \$40.

A persistent challenge in scientific research is how to present ideas and findings in a way that manages to engage an audience and convey an understanding of the underlying data. The reviewed book is a fresh and highly inspiring addition to the bulk of literature on this problem area.

The book is divided into four overarching parts: Understanding Perception, Designing Your Data, Organizing Your Data, and Delivering and Defending Your Data. The first part deals with the cognitive processes involved in understanding a presentation of data, for example how visual cues such as color, size, contrast, and geometric shapes affect people's understanding of saliency, patterns, and trends in the data. In relation to this discussion, the author repeatedly refers to a phenomenon known as the curse of knowledge, which means that people after having learned something tend to forget what it was like not knowing what was learned. There is also a connection made to Gestalt psychology, aimed at explaining how people understand and cognitively prioritize among the visual cues while interpreting visualizations.

The second part discusses how to select and use various diagram types and diagram elements that optimally correspond to an understanding of relations within the data that the presenter wants to convey. A principle that is stressed by the author in this regard is the importance of reducing the information present in the visualizations in order to enhance important patterns.

The third part explains how to organize data in order to optimally communicate a message in a clear and logical manner to the audience. An organizing framework that permeates the discussion in this part of the book is the so-called Minto pyramid (named after the consultant Barbara Minto) which facilitates the structuring of a presentation into a hierarchy of main ideas connected to a number

of key points, which are in turn furnished by supporting points and relevant elements of evidence.

The fourth part discusses ideas on how to organize the data in order to guide the audience through the presentation and communicate key topics in a way that is clear and comprehensible to the audience. This part also covers how to predict and respond to resistance from the audience to the presentation, based on a general understanding of how the audience may react to various aspects of the presentation.

The organization, presentation, and layout of the book are congruent with the message it presents. Its chapters are richly illustrated with illuminating figures, tables, and examples that guide the reader through the content. Every chapter ends with a summary of the key concepts discussed in the chapter, a list of statements capturing the essence of the content presented ('If you remember nothing else ...'), as well as an exercise.

To help the reader learn the principles connected to the advice given, the author provides memorable acronyms such as WIIFT ('What's In It For Them'), TOP-T ('the Topic, the Orient, the Point, and the Transition'), and MECE ('Mutually Exclusive and Collectively Exhaustive'). The book is full of concrete advice on how to optimize the communication of data so that key points are clearly presented and explained. The tone throughout the book expresses confidence in the presented methods.

What is, however, somewhat missing in the text is a permeating interaction with relevant research that would substantiate the effectiveness of the principles and methods employed throughout the book. This is ostensibly based on a decision to make the presentation straightforward, with a focus on practical applicability.

It is the overall assessment of this reviewer that the book is very successful in what it apparently aims to do, namely to act as a practical handbook on how to communicate data to an audience. The advice presented throughout the book is concrete, makes sense, and appears to be easily implemented. The book convincingly illustrates the well-known principle that less is often more, and rightly stresses that the message should not get lost in the details.

Johan Eklund  
Swedish School of Library and Information Science  
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