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Beautiful Evidence



Synopsis

Science and art have in common intense seeing, the wide-eyed observing that generates visual information. Beautiful Evidence is about how seeing turns into showing, how data and evidence turn into explanation. The book identifies excellent and effective methods for showing nearly every kind of information, suggests many new designs (including sparklines), and provides analytical tools for assessing the credibility of evidence presentations (which are seen from both sides: how to produce and how to consume presentations). For alert consumers of presentations, there are chapters on diagnosing evidence corruption and PowerPoint pitches. Beautiful Evidence concludes with 2 chapters that leave the world of pixel and paper flatland representations - and move onto seeing and thinking in space land, the real-land of three-space and time. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I finished tuftte last night... what a disaster, or perhaps sunk with high expectations. I'm a huge fan of dr. tuftte's very influential writing on information visualization - as far as I know he's done the best work in the field. But this book - while simply physically and visually stunning - is a real disappointment. In this work I read about 20% insight, 40% recycled material and preaching to what is probably the choir (this includes an overly repetitious chapter-long discussion of minard's lovely march to moscow graphic & his previously available power point piece), and 40% filler & drek. I don't find his comments on art, writing styles, baseball, and the like to be terribly compelling, and

are certainly done better in many other works - and indeed, his thoughts on these ended up as being pretty grating and condescending, if not just wrong. And that the book ends with several pages of photos (a few of really poor quality, I might add) his own outdoor artwork (which are of passable quality, but what the *bleep* does this have to do with evidence as defined at the front of the book?) only throws salt on the wounds. This thing is maddeningly inconsistent. I wish I could simply dismiss the work, but it's full of beauty and joy as well as the bad. Sparklines are fun, but could be improved on. Words + images combined inline, some great stuff there. But while some of the really lovely things, like the translations of Galileo, are wonderful and exciting to any science-loving person, they really are pretty pointless to the conversation at hand. He has gone straight down since his first major book - a 5+ star effort, the 2nd, 4.5-5 stars, 3rd, 3 stars, and this is about a 2 star one (2.5+ if you haven't read the others).

This is the fourth of Edward Tufte's books on the graphical display of information, and one might fear that he might be stretching the point too far and running out of ideas. One would be wrong, however, because this is a wonderful book, and is possibly the best of the four. It is a must-have, must-read, must-understand, must-apply sort of book. No one who is seriously interested in preparing illustrations for conveying information can afford to be unfamiliar with Tufte's ideas. Inevitably there is some overlap with the earlier books, but this is deliberate policy, not carelessness. As Tufte makes clear, it is better to repeat information than to expect readers to hunt for it somewhere else. Many potentially useful books have been rendered much more difficult to use than they ought to be, at worst by gathering together the artwork in one place, far away from the text that it relates to, or, slightly less bad, by failing to ensure that it appears on the same double-page spread as its accompanying text. Tufte doesn't even believe in referring to tables and figures by numbers, because he considers that any illustration can just be introduced with "here" or "in this example", etc., if it is properly placed. This is what he practises himself, but the technical demands of commercial publishers will make it difficult advice to follow, unfortunately. However, with modern computer-based publishing it ought to become easy in the future if enough pressure is put on publishers. If Galileo could integrate all of his diagrams into his text, why can we not do that now, with far more technical aids at our disposal than were available to him?

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