

# Bit by Bit Social Research in the Digital Age

## Description

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by Matthew J. Salganik, [Princeton University Press](#), 2017

Very positive reviews by:

- [Times Higher Education, Farida Vis, 11 January 2011](#)
- [Science Magazine, David Lazar, 2 January 2018](#)
- [Princeton University Press Blog, author interview, 7 December 2017](#)

Selected quotes:

Overall, the book relies on a repeated narrative device, imagining how a social scientist and a data scientist might approach the same research opportunity. Salganik suggests that where data scientists are glass-half-full people and see opportunities, social scientists are quicker to highlight problems (the glass-half-empty camp). He is also upfront about how he has chosen to write the book, adopting the more optimistic view of the data scientist, while holding on to the caution expressed by social scientists.

Salganik argues that data scientists most often work with readymades, social scientists with custommades, illustrating the point through art: data scientists are more like Marcel Duchamp, using existing objects to make art; meanwhile, social scientists operate in the custom-made style of Michelangelo, which offers a neat fit between research questions and data, but does not scale well. The book is thus a call to arms, to encourage more interdisciplinary research and for both sides to see the potential merits and drawbacks of each approach. It will be particularly welcome to researchers who have already started to think along similar lines, of which I suspect there are many.

Illustrates important ideas with examples of outstanding research

Combines ideas from social science and data science in an accessible style and without jargon

Goes beyond the analysis of found data to discuss the collection of designed data such as surveys, experiments, and mass collaboration

Features an entire chapter on ethics

Includes extensive suggestions for further reading and activities for the classroom or self-study

Matthew J. Salganik is professor of sociology at Princeton University, where he is also affiliated with the Center for Information Technology Policy and the Center for Statistics and Machine Learning. His research has been funded by Microsoft, Facebook, and Google, and has been featured on NPR and in such publications as the New Yorker, the New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal.

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More detailed contents page available via [Amazon Look Inside](#)

PS: See also this Vimeo video presentation by Salganik: [Wiki Surveys - Open and Quantifiable Social Data Collection](#) plus [this PLOS paper](#) on the same topic.

## Category

1. Books

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