

## BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

**Data visualizations and infographics.** Sarah K.C. Mauldin. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield; 2015. Softcover: 134 p. (Kroski E, editor. Library technology essentials; vol. 8). ISBN 978-1-4422-4387-3. Price: US\$45. Available from: <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781442243866/Data-Visualizations-and-Infographics>.

Infographics and data visualizations have become increasingly popular over the last few years as a way to present data and information in a visual and accessible way. They have become ubiquitous in mainstream media (from bus ads to workout routines), and are frequently used by organizations reporting health information, whether it be the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation on the Zika virus [1], the Canadian Cancer Society on their research review process [2], or the Canadian Institute for Health Information on health system spending [3]. As an embedded health research librarian interested in employing more infographics and data visualizations in my work, as well as more specifically looking for novel ways to present findings for a recently conducted scoping review, I was excited to review this book.

In *Data visualizations and infographics*, Mauldin takes the reader through an introduction to data visualization and infographics and gives descriptions of the scenarios and tools in which readers might consider using infographics. Mauldin also provides some case studies and examples of successful visualizations created by other librarians/libraries, as well as step-by-step instructions on how to use a number of the different tools and applications. Finally, the monograph wraps up with some final tips, tricks, and trends in the field of infographics and data visualization.

Written specifically for librarians by a librarian, Mauldin is very attentive to her audience, highlighting a variety of tools with limited budgets and (or) time in mind, and provides inclusive examples discussing infographic projects relevant to public, academic, legal, health, and science library contexts. This mindfulness of the audience is likely also the reason there are relatively few images in the book, and why none of them are in colour—to keep the cost of the monograph itself low. While admirable, I feel that this detracts from the work. Some of the infographics are difficult to make out in grayscale, and the chapter of step-by-step projects would have greatly benefited from screenshots either accompanying or replacing written instructions that were a bit tedious to follow without visuals.

Despite these drawbacks, this would still make a great resource for a librarian wanting to delve into infographics for the first time, as well as for intermediate users wanting to experiment with different tools. Mauldin provides detailed (and very practical) descriptions of some of the major infographic and data visualization tools, such as Piktochart, Easel.ly, TimelineJS, Capzles, Mindmeister, Creately, StatPlanet, and DataFerrett, incorporating infor-

mation about their ease of use, cost, software requirements, and accepted data formats. The author also details a number of excellent online data sources that can be used to identify statistics and other information points to help fill the infographic. Although the majority of the sources are from the United States, Mauldin is also careful to include some international and European resources.

My favourite part of this monograph (apart from the author's writing style, which was fun and easy to read) is the wealth of examples. By highlighting the award-winning works of other libraries, as well as providing step-by-step examples using a variety of tools, Mauldin inspires creativity while also instilling confidence. To quote the author, this monograph provides me with “a ‘that bright person did this with this tool, I’m a bright person, that means I can use this tool to make something great as well’ feeling” (p. 13).

This was a quick, practical, and interesting read. I have already had a number of occasions in my workplace to apply the knowledge I gleaned from Mauldin's work (as well as requests to borrow the book), and I definitely feel more confident and inspired to explore different types of visualizations for my scoping review and work in general.

I would recommend this book in its electronic format if the images are provided in colour and (or) you have the ability to zoom in on them, and especially if hyperlinking is enabled. There was an abundance of intriguing resources and websites highlighted by Mauldin that I made note to check out afterwards, but inevitably forgot once I put down the book. Reading this resource from a tablet or computer would lend itself better to that kind of serendipitous learning, facilitate a deeper interaction with the field and the wealth of resources provided by Mauldin, and overcome some of the shortcomings I initially noted about the availability of images.

### References

1. CBC News. WHO's Zika response must strike a delicate balance: doctor [Internet]. Canadian Broadcasting Company; 2016 [cited 30 Mar 2016]. Available from: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/world-health-organization-zika-virus-1.3427920>
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3. Canadian Institute for Health Information. National health expenditures infographics [Internet]. 2015 [cited 30 Mar 2016]. Available from: <https://www.cihi.ca/en/spending-and-health-workforce/spending/health-spending-data/national-health-expenditure-nhex>

### Sarah Visintini

Replacement Librarian, Berkman Library  
University of Ottawa Heart Institute  
Ottawa ON  
K1Y 4W7, Canada.  
Email: [Svisinti@uottawa.ca](mailto:Svisinti@uottawa.ca)