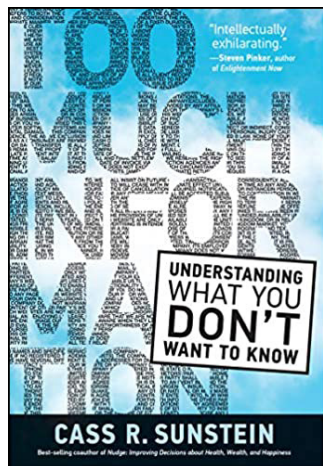**Cass R. Sunstein.** *Too Much Information: Understanding What You Don't Want to Know.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020. 264p. Hardcover, $27.95 (ISBN 978-0-2620-4416-5).

When should the government require information disclosure? Cass Sunstein attempts to answer this by offering a framework in his latest book, *Too Much Information: Understanding What You Don't Want to Know.*

Sunstein assigns a moral as well as economic value to choices around disclosure: a salad is "better" than a cheeseburger, but you'll enjoy your meal less. While he suggests personalized disclosures throughout the book, this view of what information has inherent value shapes how his questions are developed and the framework that forms his argument. Many of his conclusions are based on a study conducted in Mechanical Turk, Amazon's gig economy platform for tasks requiring human intelligence.

This is an interesting methodological decision. Sunstein notes of the survey results, "Amazingly, just 54 percent wanted to know how the stock market will be doing on a specified date in the future. (Apparently people did not think, as they should: If I receive that information, I can make essentially all the money I want.)" For many of the Mechanical Turk workers plugging away at hundreds of survey questions a day, information about the stock market isn't relevant because it's the sort of unactionable information Sunstein would call boring mental clutter. Instead of considering the enormous barriers to creating a stock market portfolio for someone who needs gig economy work to live, he is astonished.[1] The references for this analysis clarify that his survey was not representative but that he's engaged with a national-level survey that will be. Presumably this also will use Mechanical Turk, where the value of a representative sample is explicitly communicated. An MT worker with a graduate degree costs more per tasks than a high school graduate.[2]

Sunstein does this again while citing a study on prospective payday loan borrowers: it's unreasonable to compare the APR of credit card debt, car loans, or mortgages even though they have far better terms than a payday loan. The study, "Information Disclosure, Cognitive Biases and Payday Borrowing" (Bertrand and Morse, 2010), acknowledges the circumstances that drive payday loans often mean consumers are already acting in their best interests: they've picked the best bad option. Sunstein omits this from his narrative and, like the stock market example, doesn't acknowledge that, while the information is useful, it isn't actionable. This is because *Too Much Information* isn't written so people entrenched in systemic crisis can understand marketing, regulation, and disclosure, or make "better" choices. It's written for people who believe those choices exist.

Sunstein gets a number of things right: information has a cost. Disclosures have positive and negative outcomes. Throughout the book Sunstein offers what should be examples of actionable information outside the context of American life, but doesn't move forward into the space where his background as a regulator could be powerful: does requiring nutritional information on fast food menus matter in food deserts or to people facing enormous systemic inequalities? The text repeatedly misses how information disclosure functions in larger social contexts, which is odd because Sunstein's academic work doesn't. His 2014 article, "Disclosure: Psychology Changes Everything," which he repackages throughout *Too Much Information*, does ask for more qualitative research. It's a shame there's no acknowledgment of any research

published since then about income and fast food consumption. The Centers for Disease Control's recent findings show higher income means more fast food consumption, not less.[3] Or, the research done on the federal government's programs to incentivize development of fast food chains in Black neighborhoods since the 1960s. None of this is here. There's no single gap that ruins an otherwise engaging text with an interesting premise, though the chapter on Facebook suffers because it lacks any investigation into disclosures in the context of social media, and the book would be stronger with it cut. It's the total of these omissions resting on underbaked methodology inviting doubt.

Someone with Sunstein's enormous reach could do good in this moment, erase the vivid moment of a friend's claim that he'd "ruined popcorn" as a result of his work in the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs under President Obama. *Too Much Information* suffers because it's deeply invested in a mechanized solution. Enough nudging, suggestion through design, and unsubtle architectures and we can better our lives.

Sunstein's *choice architecture* (a concept from his earlier work, *Nudge*) makes no mention of the designer of those choices, and how consumer responses to disclosures about everything from safety regulations to nutritional information, to privacy policies and ingredients lists are influenced by factors that cannot be assessed by asking how much someone will pay for information.

In a book full of interesting choices, where Sunstein chooses to go further into disciplinary weeds and when he avoids it becomes a tell. Although he explains that each chapter is a substantial revision of previous work, I am skeptical this happened in a useful way. An anecdote about a conversation with President Obama is reduced to "the President might've said a *naughty* word!"

His discussion of *sludge* brings similar frustration. Sludge is taxing, drains energy, and creates barriers. Reducing annoying paperwork is good. I have a recurring nightmare where I'm making a student loan payment with a paper check inside a DMV with jaundiced lighting and walls. Sunstein correctly notes that women do the majority of administrative tasks and "sludge" work of running a household and raising children, but he concludes eliminating sludge might address the issue. He does not suggest men learn to perform a more equitable share of these tasks.

He goes on to discuss gender disparities and workplace promotions, where Sunstein concludes, "Evidently men are more willing than women to put themselves forward and hence to navigate some sludge. When sludge is removed, disparities between men and women are essentially eliminated." But housework isn't valued in real economic terms, and the literature about consequences for women who don't perform niceness or give "correct" reasons for their ambition at work is well established.[4]

There are good ideas here: default voter registration, confirmation buttons when you want to delete things. It's the absence of engagement with dark patterns, or deeper investigation into the user experience of information disclosure, that keep this work from hitting its potential. The result of nudges, sludge, and determining what information is too much is a vast, invasive surveillance apparatus, designed in the name of bettering the lives of others while imposing a singular, paternalistic vision of the improved life. The problem is not that the government is bad at regulation through nudging, but that forces more powerful than Sunstein imagines through this book are at work in the lives of everyone. Who nudges the nudgers is not what Sunstein wants to confront, though he comes closer with each iteration of this series of ideas.—*Scarlet Galvan, Grand Valley State University*

Notes

1. Aaron Smith, "Gig Work, Online Selling and Home Sharing," *Pew Research Center* 17 (2016).
2. See pricing by worker attributes at: https://requester.mturk.com/pricing.
3. Cheryl D. Fryar et al., "Fast Food Consumption among Adults in the United States, 2013–2016," NCHS Data Brief No. 322 (October 2018), https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db322-h.pdf.
4. H.R. Bowles, L. Babcock, and L. Lai, "Social Incentives for Gender Differences in the Propensity to Initiate Negotiations: Sometimes It Does Hurt to Ask," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 103, no. 1 (2007): 84–103.

Melissa A. Wong and Laura Saunders. *Instruction in Libraries and Information Centers: An Introduction.* Urbana-Champaign, IL: Windsor & Downs Press, 2020. Online.
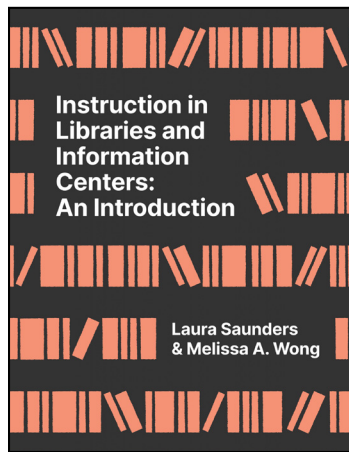
Within the literature for library and information science (LIS) practitioners, there are a number of books published about information literacy and library instruction ranging from practical instruction cookbooks with activities and lesson plans, to books more focused on critical information literacy. Practitioners and students who are interested in reading about library instruction and teaching information literacy have many choices, but those who are new to the topic may not know where to start. Laura Saunders, an associate professor at the School of Library and Information Science at Simmons University, and Melissa A. Wong, an adjunct instructor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, wrote *Instruction in Libraries and Information Centers: An Introduction* as an open access textbook that is designed to teach and prepare anyone interested in library instruction, particularly library school students taking coursework in this area. For those who feel shy or intimidated about learning theory, Sanders and Wong take great care in breaking down each theoretical concept and providing ample examples throughout the book. The authors include reflective exercises that allow readers to pause and reflect on the reading. They make learning theory much more accessible and digestible to students and those who are new to these concepts. Each chapter provides the key theories and cites foundational scholarship in education and LIS; so, if there are particular areas that one might want to learn more about, they can explore the further readings.

The book is organized into five sections: Introduction to Instruction in Libraries, Foundations of Teaching and Learning, Instructional Design, Teaching across Venues and Modalities, and Program Management. The introduction begins with a fascinating historical overview of library instruction, positioning librarians as teachers and explaining why library patrons have needed instruction on how to access and use library materials. Saunders and Wong then define information literacy, taking a historical approach and exploring how the definition has shifted over time, as well as its application in the libraries and archives field. They also take note of other movements in the field to discuss critical approaches to information literacy, how various professional organizations like AASL, ACRL, and IMLS have used information literacy to guide instruction librarians and how understanding patron perspectives of information literacy can also guide the work of teaching librarians.

In the Foundations of Teaching and Learning section, Saunders and Wong lay out some of the fundamental learning and educational theories. They break down general learning