



Information: A Very Short Introduction

Luciano Floridi

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We live in a society that is awash with information, but few of us really understand what information is. In this *Very Short Introduction*, one of the world's leading authorities on the philosophy of information and on information ethics, Luciano Floridi, offers an illuminating exploration of information as it relates to both philosophy and science. He discusses the roots of the concept of information in mathematics and science, and considers the role of information in several fields, including biology. Floridi also discusses concepts such as "Infoglut" (too much information to process) and the emergence of an information society, and he addresses the nature of information as a communication process and its place as a physical phenomenon. Perhaps more important, he explores information's meaning and value, and ends by considering the broader social and ethical issues relating to information, including problems surrounding accessibility, privacy, ownership, copyright, and open source. This book helps us understand the true meaning of the concept and how it can be used to understand our world.

About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, **Very Short Introductions** offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

Information: A Very Short Introduction Details

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Seyed says

A useful overview of the landscape of information covering a broad sweep of syntax (mathematical), semantics as well as contexts such as biological and economic. Necessarily brief given the format but still clearly illustrated with examples.

David Roberts says

The book I read to research this post was Information A Very Short Introduction by Luciano Floridi which is a very good book which I bought from kindle. This book is just an introduction to the topic of information storage and is selective in what it covers. In keeping with this series of books the book has to be around 150 pages. In the coming years the amount of information stored is set to grow exponentially. At the moment people are quite distrustful of information that is stored about but as better methods of storage come into play and people see more benefits that may gradually change. A new idea is the Quantum Computer which will be a computer that will be able to do things we can barely dream about. One problem in developing this is that some of the components are very fragile, but as time goes on that will change. Another idea is having computers that will be hard wired to do certain things. These computers wouldn't need programs to be written for them. Finally something that is in its infancy is online games and this is likely to get more popular. Also virtual goods are likely to become more identified with online games and websites. It's interesting that you used to be able to buy virtual items like avatars on Ebay but they stopped it.

Kathleen O'Neal says

Very confusing and not at all well written. A concept with potential that fell flat in the execution.

Dima Nono says

Information: A very short introduction is one of the many books which provide general information about subject to readers, who are not specialist in the field.

Author describes different context of information usage in everyday life: general theory of information, genetic, DNA, neuroinformation, economic analysis of information etc. It's very helpful that in books several examples are used.

Paul Dilley says

While a lot of introductions to "data science"/"informatics" take either a hyper-optimistic or deeply skeptical approach, this forms a nice middle ground with its focus in later chapters on the ethics of using, producing,

and circulating data. Undergrads were fascinated, if sometimes a bit confused, by the concepts of Infosphere and Inforgs. On the other hand the definitions of data and information are probably the clearest I've seen.

David Gallagher says

Luciano Floridi you miserable man you made my Fridays a hell because I had to write an abstract of your book's chapters for school every Friday. But it ends this Friday, my friend. Information Theory classes are over, and so are you. And it's a popular joke around the school now that one of my classmates called your work "emotionally worthwhile." But I guess I have to give you *some* credit. I like how you write in a way only you understand it and make me feel ignorant.

I did enjoy your book however.

Alexi Parizeau says

This book finally explained why the word 'information' has different meanings, none of which are very clear. I wish I had read this book years ago.

Joshua Jarrott says

A very concise introduction to information theory and philosophy of information. Floridi does a wonderful job of picking apart the various ways the term "information" can be used. The last chapter is particularly philosophical in its implications for value theory, although it feels a tiny bit preachy (nevertheless, it is a valuable exercise, even if it does presuppose some familiarity with environmental ethics). Altogether a great read, especially considering that most of the chapters are conceptually independent enough to serve as a quick reference guide for big ideas.

Lawrence says

Clear, swift overview of different definitions of information, and different methods of evaluating and interpreting information. Part of the "Very Short Introduction" series of books, and you indeed get a good intro to mathematical, semantic, physical, biological and economic views and uses of information.

While most of the book is a summary of others' work, at the end Floridi does contribute his own concept of "information ethics", in which the entire "infosphere" is viewed as an ecology that subsumes all information and information-processors, including humans (called "inforgs"), within it. Floridi proposes that every existent "being" (biological or pure information, physical or not) in the infosphere starts off with a minimal, but potentially overridable, moral right to exist (ie attaching moral value to information's existence the way we attach moral value to organism's existence).

It's interesting, but Floridi's characterization of "biocentric" ethics that he sees his own as an improvement on seems off -- I think ecological ethics usually places more emphasis on the aggregate health of entire

species/ecologies, instead of focusing on avoiding suffering for individual organisms, as Floridi states -- eg, along the food chain the suffering of prey at predator's hands/claws/teeth is of course accepted, as long as it does not lead to extinction/environmental collapse. And there's not even a start of a suggestion as to how to navigate conflicting interpretations of what's most healthy for the infosphere ecology (eg, which "being"'s minimal rights to existence get overridden, ie what information can be thrown away). But it did make me think of the herculean efforts of, for example, Jason Scott with his Archive Team and textfiles.com projects to save huge reams of digital data that was otherwise slated for oblivion.

Also, the Kindle version introduces its own noise to the book's own information -- when an example is give ("Imagine this is 'a', and the other is 'b'...", "b" is sometimes rendered as "6", and end ")") are often rendered as "}". These fortunately are not widespread enough to ruin the book, but are amusing given the subject matter, and someone should do a statistical analysis of the amount of Kindle noise introduced into Floridi's signal, stat.

Roger B says

Most interesting chapters were the ones covering Shannon's "information theory" aka Mathematical Theory of Computation, the chapter on Physics (Maxwell's demon) and the chapter on Economics (prisoner's dilemma, complete information, perfect information, Bayesian reasoning, signalling, screening). Great volume in the VSO series!

Stokely Klasovsky says

In terms of science writing, a genre that typically aims to make scientific information accessible to the public and seems to be the goal of this series, it really fails to deliver. Most of the other authors in the "Very Short Introduction" series manage to capture the essence of their subjects in clear, apt metaphors; Floridi seems to struggle untangling the difficult aspects of information theory for the layperson. Oxford might want to give someone else a shot at this subject.

Thaer says

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Giuseppe Veltri says

A short and incredibly useful book about the different notions of information. One of those books that is a toolbox for thinking.

TAHANI says

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Emanuela says

Cosa sono i dati, cos'è un'informazione. Quali sono le caratteristiche degli oggetti e soggetti che generano informazione?

Un saggio questo di Floridi molto preciso nelle definizioni dei segnali che pervadono l'infosfera, definita come l'ambiente della quarta rivoluzione, perché mai come ora il pianeta è stato pervaso dall'informazione. Ogni categoria informativa è analizzata in profondità utilizzando metafore utili alla comprensione. La consapevolezza del cambiamento ci impone di rivedere il nostro approccio e di attivare uno sforzo affinché gli ambienti fisico e tecnologico siano in grado di procedere integrandosi e non scontrandosi.

Una sola lettura non basta, specialmente se si è addetti ai lavori, ma lo consiglio anche a chi vuole avere una panoramica globale, ma precisa, del cambiamento in atto.
