

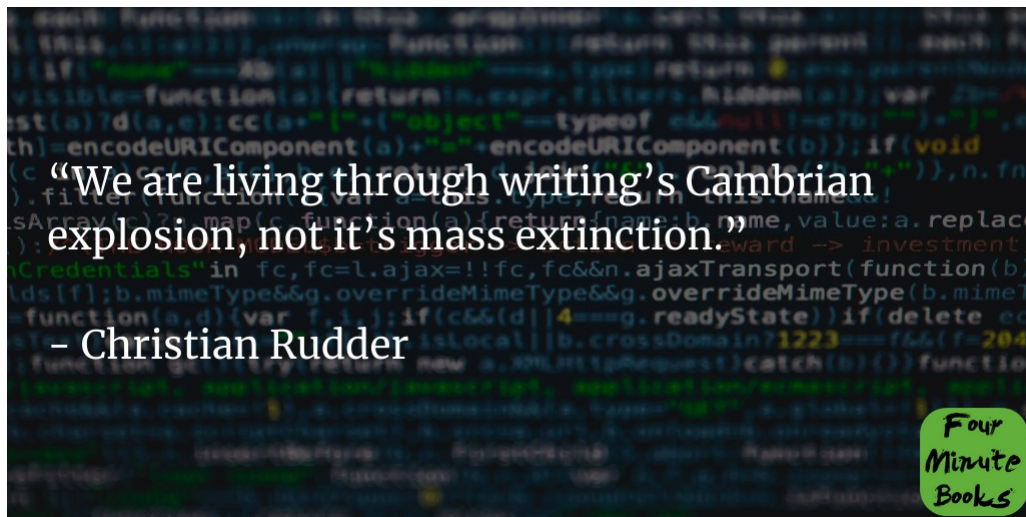
Dataclysm Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Dataclysm* gives powerful motivation for being more honest online by using information collected from the internet to identify what all of us are really like under the veil of anonymity and how we as a society have changed recently.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



If you've ever skimmed through a YouTube comments section or just about any Reddit thread, you know how awful people can be online. After all, what's the harm in saying something hurtful if nobody knows it's you?

It's easy to look at our accounts in online spaces and think this way and that there are no consequences for our actions. And especially when we can erase browser history and encrypt our devices.

But every time you comment or share, the company that owns whatever site you're on can use that data however they like.

What would this kind of information tell us about ourselves if we could read it? Well, we don't have to wonder because Christian Rudder's *Dataclysm: Love, Sex, Race, and Identity—What Our Online Lives Tell Us about Our Offline Selves* summarizes all of it! And the results are quite shocking.

Here are the 3 best lessons I got from this book:

1. Twitter actually makes people better at writing.

2. The more online connections you have, the more innovative ideas you will get, and the closer you will be to your spouse.
3. People are mean on the internet because of anonymity.

Are you as anonymous as you think when you're interacting online? You might be surprised after reading this one! Let's go!

Lesson 1: **People's writing skills have improved because of Twitter.**

While there are a lot of negative effects of the social media storm, there have been some benefits. It might be easy to think that it's all bad and that we're all less intelligent because of these platforms, but that's not true. In many ways, it's actually making us better.

Don't believe me? Even critics have to agree that our writing has improved because of social media. After all, we do far more of it than any other generation in the world.

Just think about all that you have to type to post on Facebook or Twitter. You don't even have to be a blogger to be typing dozens of words each day. **Estimates say that within the next couple of years, people will write more words on Twitter alone than all the words in every book in the world!**

Even on image-sharing platforms like Instagram or Snapchat, you've got to have a caption. And once you've posted, you'll do even more typing in the comments section of your own or other's content.

So we're doing a lot of it, but we're also getting better at the same time. Not just because of the amount of writing we're doing. Twitter's character limit, for example, helps people say more with less words.

Lesson 2: **You'll have a better relationship with your spouse and get better ideas if you have more connections online.**

Did you know that Pixar only has bathrooms in the central atrium of its campus? The purpose of this is to encourage people to have random conversations that can spark new ideas. Most innovations are simply the combination of two seemingly unrelated ideas, and this is a perfect example of how to foster that.

But the internet can do this for us too, whether or not you're a massive company. Spreading and combining ideas is best accomplished with people that we're merely acquainted with.

So think again the next time you consider thinning out your Facebook friends!

Just consider things you hear in passing on your daily commute, for example. Someone might mention a new movie or book that leads you to your new favorite. And now with social media in all sorts of forms, we can get that kind of experience every day, whenever we want!

Having more connections also benefits your relationship with your significant other. Data provided by Facebook identifies that your friendship with your spouse, for example, represents the connection between two separate social groups.

But it's also found that couples with mutual friends are more likely to stay together. Those with fewer connections in common, on the other hand, had a greater chance of splitting up. The reason was that it makes you more likely to live separate lives, which is a recipe for disaster.

Lesson 3: Most people use the veil of anonymity as an excuse to be jerks.

Okay so I wanted to focus on the positives of our digital world with this summary, but there are some negatives as well. And it's important to be aware of them.

Especially because even when you think you're being anonymous, you actually aren't, as we've already talked about. And even when you do think you are, you make humanity look like an awful group.

I mean, just go to any YouTube comments section and you'll know what I'm talking about. They always make me wonder how anyone could even think of being so mean to another human. But the information from the data provides the truth.

People are awful to each other when they think there won't be any consequences. If nothing bad will happen to you, why restrain yourself from letting out the nastiness inside? This is also known as the *online disinhibition effect*.

Take a tweet from Safiyyaah Nawaz, for example. On New Year's Day 2014 she tweeted the following:

| "This beautiful earth is now 2014 years old, amazing."

What began as confusion quickly turned to a much darker reaction. People became hurtful in their comments, without any concern for how it would make Nawaz feel. One person even told her to kill herself!

The moral of the story is, be nice, even when you think nobody is watching. It will make you a much more likable person when people are.

Dataclysm Review

Although I enjoyed *Dataclysm*, I wish it would have had more ideas on what we should do about these problems. However, I think that just by knowing our own tendencies and how anonymity affects us, we can all try to do better. Either way, this book is definitely an eye-opener!

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Who would I recommend the Dataclysm summary to?

The 42-year-old who spends too much time arguing on Reddit and has a feeling that it's making their life worse, the 23-year-old who is skeptical about how their online data is really used, and anyone that questions whether people are actually honest in their digital interactions.