In “Big Data, Big Brother, Big Money,” author Michael Lesk outlines the consequences and possibilities related to constant surveillance by private corporations. He begins the article by describing how previously, people feared surveillance from the government to control the population (such as in the novel *1984* by George Orwell), but shows that private data collection “far outstrips…public data collection.” He describes the differences in money spent, data collected per year, and power used on servers and datacenters by public and private organizations, and the reader quickly realizes how massive private corporation data collection truly is. Lesk then moves on to talk about how the collected data can be used, where he describes how plenty of erroneous data leads to incorrect conclusions, such as defining causation by correlation. But more problematic is the accurate data collected by private corporations. While some data could be useful, such as collecting information about the causes of autism-related illness, but it can be used in harmful ways (in this example, insurance or medical coverage could be denied if a person’s current medications make autism more likely in their child). Lesk also points out that while corporations collect plenty of data from their consumers, the consumers also benefit from the amount of data available to them. Comparing prices online – whether it is a new car or vacuum on Amazon and easily obtaining data about public workers are both available to citizens everywhere through the internet. Lesk concludes that because of the great benefits of online services, any future solutions must regulate data collection instead of trying to eliminate it completely.

What is especially terrifying in *1984* is the government’s ability to control people directly throughout their daily life. However, this type of direct influence can be easily identified and countered in reality, but the data collection completely under the radar by private corporations can be used in much subtler (and more dangerous) ways. An example would be Facebook’s ability to identify swing voters and then give them targeted ads so as to sway their election decisions for government positions (up to and including the president). Facebook subtly influences people without them realizing it, which is much more frightening to me than the government trying to directly force its will upon me.