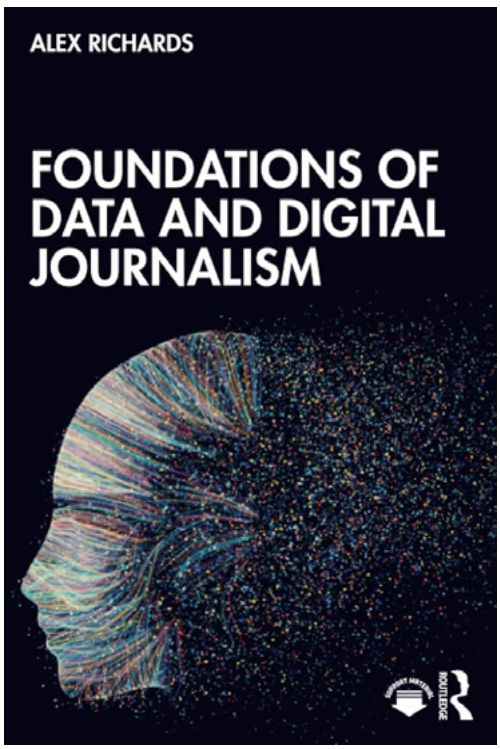
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# Foundations of Data and Digital Journalism

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**Foundations of Data and Digital Journalism**

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**Alex Richards**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex Richards is an assistant professor at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. Richards was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in 2011, and his reporting has been honored with the Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting and the Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism, among others. He previously worked as a data reporter and editor for the Chicago Tribune, Nerdwallet, The Chronicle of Higher Education, and the Las Vegas Sun. Richards is also a former training director for Investigative Reporters & Editors, where he taught in-depth reporting and data journalism techniques in newsrooms across the country.

## INTRODUCTION:

Data journalism is rapidly gaining prominence as one of the critical areas within the field due to its ability to transform vast amounts of information into meaningful and accessible stories. In an era dominated by an unprecedented abundance of data, journalists are leveraging the power of data analysis and visualization to uncover hidden patterns, trends, and insights. The integration of data-driven approaches allows journalists to provide a more nuanced and evidence-based perspective on complex issues, fostering a more profound understanding among audiences. Therefore, scholars from diverse disciplines and professional fields are closely following and recording the developments in the field. As the demand for information accuracy and transparency continues to grow, data journalism emerges as an indispensable tool, empowering journalists to navigate the information landscape effectively and contribute to a more informed and engaged society. "Foundations of Data and Digital Journalism" by Alex Richards is a comprehensive guide that delves into the world of data journalism and equips aspiring journalists and data enthusiasts with the tools they need to harness the power of data for storytelling. In a digital age where information is abundant, the ability to sift through data, analyze it, and present it in a compelling manner is invaluable. Richards takes readers on a journey through the different aspects of data journalism, from understanding the

fundamentals of data to mastering the use of data analysis tools like spreadsheets and R, as well as creating data visualizations and even web development basics.

The book kicks off with an exploration of why data journalism is not just relevant but crucial in today's media landscape. Richards makes a compelling case for the importance of data journalism, emphasizing how it can lead to more accurate, engaging, and impactful storytelling. By uncovering trends, anomalies, and insights hidden in data, journalists can uncover stories that might otherwise go unnoticed. Richards introduces readers to the basics of data literacy and numeracy, ensuring that they have the skills to understand and work with data effectively. The concept of "bulletproofing" information is introduced, which involves verifying data sources and ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data you work with. This is a fundamental step in the data journalism process.

Richards also takes readers through the sources of data, distinguishing between public and non-public data. He guides the readers through the process of obtaining data, including how to make official requests for data and recognizes the limitations of what's "gettable." The book also provides invaluable guidance on the often challenging task of acquiring data for journalistic purposes. While elaborating upon the essential tools for data journalists, Richards introduces the utility of spreadsheets, which are the bread and butter of data analysis. He also explains the advantages and limitations of using spreadsheets and dives into practical guidance for working with data in Google Sheets. The chapter covers essential concepts, data import, and data exploration, making it accessible to both beginners and those looking to refine their skills.

This chapter focuses on the core functions of data manipulation within spreadsheets. Sorting, filtering, and pivot tables are explored in detail. Richards walks readers through the process of organizing and summarizing data effectively, which is essential for any data journalism project.

Data is rarely perfect, and in Chapter 6, Richards provides advanced techniques for cleaning and preparing data for analysis. The use of functions, text manipulation, and dealing with date data are covered in depth. These skills are crucial for working with real-world, messy datasets.

Data visualization is a key aspect of data journalism, and Chapter 7 offers a solid foundation for creating meaningful visualizations. Common types of visualizations are discussed, along with the process of designing effective graphics. Richards also emphasizes the importance of using colour judiciously and avoiding common pitfalls in data visualization.

Moving beyond spreadsheets, Richards introduces readers to R, a powerful tool for data analysis, in Chapter 8. This chapter provides a solid introduction to R, focusing on the tidyverse, a collection of R packages that simplifies data manipulation and analysis. Readers learn how to import data, work with data frames, and write their own R scripts.

Building on the basics introduced in the previous chapter, Richards delves deeper into R's capabilities in Chapter 9. Readers are guided through sorting, filtering, summarizing data, and joining datasets using R and the tidyverse. This chapter equips readers with the skills to conduct more complex data analysis, which is invaluable for data-driven journalism.

In Chapter 10, the book takes a turn towards web development, a valuable skill for any data journalist. Richards introduces the basics of HTML and CSS, explaining how these languages work together to create web content. He covers HTML elements, CSS selectors, and properties, making web development accessible to beginners.

Building on the previous chapter, Chapter 11 section covers more advanced CSS topics, including layout and the Bootstrap framework. Readers learn about the box model, responsiveness, content divisions, and using Bootstrap to create responsive web designs. The chapter is a solid introduction to web design for data journalism.

The final chapter offers readers a roadmap for further exploration. Richards provides resources and guidance on where to continue learning about data journalism, data analysis, and web development.

"Foundations of Data and Digital Journalism" is a well-structured and comprehensive guide that equips readers with the essential skills and knowledge needed to excel in the field of data journalism. Alex Richards' approach is practical, making complex concepts accessible to a broad audience, from aspiring journalists to seasoned professionals looking to expand their skill set. The book is a valuable resource that empowers individuals to harness the power of data for impactful storytelling in the digital age. Whether you're a journalist, a student, or someone interested in data analysis and reporting, this book is a must-read for anyone looking to excel in the world of data and digital journalism.