From the Sections of RUSA

Outstanding Business Information Sources 2025

Introduction

Each year, the Business Information Sources Committee of the Business Reference and Services Section (BRASS) selects the outstanding business information sources published since May of the previous year. This year, the committee reviewed twenty-three entries; of these, two were designated as "Outstanding" and four as "Notable." Works are examined for the following: ease of use; reputation of the publisher, author, or editor; accuracy; appropriate bibliography; organization; comprehensiveness; value of the content; currency or timeliness; uniqueness; quality and accuracy of index or cited references; and quality and usefulness of graphics and illustrations. This year's selection of works covers a wide range of topics, including artificial intelligence, women who shaped finance and retail, Spotify's impact on the music industry, the challenges inherent in energy transition, and redirecting economic growth.

Outstanding

Co-Intelligence: Living and Working with AI. Ethan Mollick. New York: Portfolio/Penguin, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2024. 256 p. Hardcover: $30. (ISBN: 9780593716717). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9780593716724).

More people are using artificial intelligence (AI) for a variety of purposes, including business operations, research, education, and creating art. As AI use increases exponentially, Ethan Mollick[1] discusses several strategies for using AI to maximize the benefits and reduce the risks. For each strategy, Mollick includes recommendations and relevant examples from his research and his "conversations" with AI systems.

Mollick's first strategy recommends that everyone learn more about AI and how to use it as an assistive tool. Second, people need to double-check the AI system's feedback and replies to identify bias. Studies show AI may provide answers that it concludes will satisfy the user, even if the answer is incorrect. Also, because an AI system analyzes an infinite number of files, some of those resources might create bias if they have inconsistent (or incorrect) conclusions or even contradict each other. Third, people should avoid personifying AI but still guide the AI system by defining expectations and constraints on their queries. Additionally, people must distinguish between an AI

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BRASS Business Information Sources Committee contributing members: Sara Heimann and Joy Hopkins Camp, selections co-editors; Amy Jansen, committee chair; Allison F. Gallaspy, Breezy Silver, Carmen E. Orth-Alfie, Catherine MacGregor, Chloe Dufour, Carolyn M. Klotzbach-Russell, Devin Sanera, Edward Kownslar, Katie O'Hara-Krebs, Meghann Kuhlmann, Natalia Tingle Dolan, Paul Brothers, and Ryan Yoakum.

system's potential abilities with creativity and innovation. While AI can be creative, and it can be an important resource for brainstorming (for example, it can generate long lists), it cannot be innovative to the same degree as people. The last of Mollick's principles states that people should expect AI systems to only improve in the future.

Mollick includes a helpful and concise background of AI, including terminology, such as Large Language Models (LLMs); how the text analysis and predictive abilities of AI have evolved, such as supervised learning and pretraining; the standard tests for computer/machine intelligence, including the Turing Test and Lovelace Test; and the landmark studies, such as Google's introduction of the Transformer AI architecture titled "Attention is All You Need."

Co-Intelligence outlines several other AI advantages. AI has significantly improved productivity in areas that produce fact-based resources, such as business communication and tutoring. AI provides useful supplemental analyses with data and research studies. Also, people who do not consider themselves creative can use AI to generate art and illustrations for ideas and projects. However, Mollick warns that we lack common (and agreed-upon) laws, standards, and norms about developing and using AI, particularly with copyright, and those issues must be resolved as soon as possible.

Co-Intelligence: Living and Working with AI was selected as one of the best books of 2024 by *The Economist*[2]. Recommended for all readers, public and academic libraries.

Reviewed by Edward Kownslar, Stephen F. Austin State University

References

1. Ethan Mollick is the Ralph J. Roberts Distinguished Faculty Scholar and Associate Professor of Management at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.
2. The best books of 2024, as chosen by *The Economist*. (2024, November 22). *The Economist*.

She-Wolves: The Untold History of Women on Wall Street. Paulina Bren. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2024. 384 p. Hardcover $29.99. (ISBN: 9781324035152). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9781324035169).

She-Wolves: The Untold History of the Women of Wall Street by Paulina Bren offers readers a new perspective on the male-dominated world of finance. Bren's well-researched and engaging work highlights the lives and trials of the industry's female pioneers who scrabbled for a foothold in New York's Financial District from the 1950s to 9/11. Readers get a glimpse into the plight of women from all levels of society who had the brains, education, and talent to make it but were lacking opportunity, faced barriers of gender inequality, and endured sexism and other hardships to break into the sacred "boys club."

She-Wolves' primary focus is on women in the mid-twentieth century, but the book also includes tales of the Financial District's earliest female movers and shakers. From the early days of the Progressive Era—a time when Wall Street firms created women's departments to cater to the investment needs of their gender but did not offer opportunities to work in the industry in any real capacity—these women pushed the envelope and paid the price. Those who dabbled in finance were demonized and othered, labeled charlatans and clairvoyants. One was dubbed the "Witch of Wall Street," aligning with the misogyny of both the time and the industry.

Bren is not alone in shedding light on the underheard voices and stories of women and members of minoritized communities finding their way "in a man's world." Whether breaking codes during World War II, aiding in the safe landing and reentry of the first Americans in space, or becoming traders on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, these stories provide a more complete and accurate account for the historical record.

This book deserves space in library collections because of its dual appeal; it focuses on the business world, while also spotlighting an important piece of history that has gone unreported. *She-Wolves* is a valuable addition to any academic or public library's business or general collection and will be of interest to a broad range of patrons, including business historians, students and faculty in economics and finance, women's and gender studies scholars, and members of social justice book clubs. While the vignettes and individual stories of these women who broke the glass ceiling are insightful, impressive, and, at times, harrowing and hard to digest, they are crucial, valuable, and a necessary truth.

Bren concludes *She-Wolves* in 2001 with America focused on the terrorist attacks in Lower Manhattan. Today, close to a quarter-century removed from the destruction of the Twin Towers, it begs the question: What is progress? While enrollment in US business schools is reaching gender parity, is that equality reflected on the floor of stock exchanges or in the boardroom? For all the strife that females in the early days endured to stand toe to toe with men on trading floors, how far do women still have to travel in the world of finance and beyond?

Reviewed by Katie O'Hara-Krebs, Pennsylvania State University

Notable

Mood Machine: The Rise of Spotify and the Costs of the Perfect Playlist. Liz Pelly. New York: Atria/One Signal Publishers, 2025. 288 p. Hardcover $28.99. (ISBN: 9781668083505). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9781668083529).

Mood Machine offers a multifaceted look at the processes behind Spotify's rise to prominence and the subsequent effects on the music industry, listeners, and the sounds of music itself. The author, Liz Pelly, is an experienced music journalist who has covered Spotify for more than a decade. Pelly draws from interviews with former Spotify employees, industry insiders, and musicians, as well as internal company communications and extensive published sources. Her use of internal communications and employee interviews adds to the existing literature by providing evidence of practices that had previously been the subject of speculation.

The strength of this work is the multiple stakeholder perspectives it draws from, which demonstrate the effect Spotify has had on the way music is produced and consumed. For instance, Pelly draws a connection between the company's decision to prioritize so-called lean-back listeners by curating mood-based playlists designed for background music and the later development of data dashboards for artists that encourage musicians to make music in styles similar to what is already popular. *Mood Machine* also outlines Spotify's role in shaping the current landscape of royalties and licensing agreements, and the effects it has on labor laws and policies for artists. Recognizing that music culture is currently at a crossroads, the book concludes by exploring the potential for creating more equitable and sustainable systems for musicians to thrive in the streaming era.

This approachable book should appeal to music and technology enthusiasts, business students, and researchers. Recommended for both public and academic library collections.

Reviewed by Meghann Kuhlmann, Wichita State University

When Women Ran Fifth Avenue: Glamour and Power at the Dawn of American Fashion. Julie Satow. New York: Doubleday, 2024. 320 p. Hardcover $32.50 (ISBN: 9780385548755). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9780385548762).

During a period when the business world remained largely dominated by men, *When Women Ran Fifth Avenue* follows the groundbreaking journeys of Hortense Odlum, Dorothy Shaver, and Geraldine Stutz as they ascended to top leadership positions across premier retail institutions, including Bonwit Teller, Lord & Taylor, and Henri Bendel. Spanning several decades, Julie Satow highlights how these three often overlooked women broke gender barriers, revolutionized American retail, and shaped fashion culture, all while navigating societal expectations and personal sacrifices. The book is a sometimes-intimate look at each woman's life, which highlights not only their personal stories but also their business acumen and innovative leadership styles. The women's stories are set against the backdrop of New York City's fashion world, illustrating how department stores shaped and reflected public taste and consumer culture.

Satow spent three years researching this book, drawing from a variety of sources, including biographies, memoirs, archives, family interviews, news articles, and advertisements. The primary sources allow each woman's authentic voice to come through, and the text is enriched with direct quotations, historical photographs, and vivid period details. Satow places the women in a historic context, discussing the impact of shifting New York City neighborhoods, changes in manufacturing, and evolving gender expectations. The historical framing adds an essential layer to the narrative and shows how each woman's career was both shaped by and helped shape the social and economic changes unfolding around her.

While thoroughly researched, the book is also written to engage a general audience, blending scholarly insight with narrative flair. For academic librarians, this interdisciplinary work is a valuable addition to collections in women's history, fashion studies, and business leadership. Its potential for broad appeal to general audiences, students, and scholars makes it a good fit for both public and academic libraries.

Reviewed by Carolyn Klotzbach-Russell, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York

Growth: A History and a Reckoning. Daniel Susskind. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2024. 304 p. Hardcover $29.95 (ISBN: 9780674294493). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9780674297050).

Author Daniel Susskind, a former Kennedy Scholar at Harvard University who has also worked within the British government, is an economics professor researching the ethics of AI. Susskind leverages his background and experience to explain economic expansion—its history, present, and future in his book *Growth*.

Susskind shares the history of competing economic theories, describes how economic conditions and growth were measured in the past, and explains how, for much of human existence, there was a "long stagnation" when economic conditions generally remained the same. This changed after 1800 when economic growth exploded.

The use of economic growth as a measure of a country's economic success is a recent occurrence. It started with the need to track resources and the status of countries during and after World War II. Today, gross national product and gross domestic product (GNP/GDP) numbers have become essential figures, with the goal of continuing to increase them. However, this focus on continued economic growth has come with costs, including income inequality and environmental impacts.

Economists have theorized different ways to shift this attention to continuous economic growth. Susskind discusses alternatives proposed by various experts, including GDP minimalism and degrowth. He also explains the morality of economic growth impacts and the schools of thought aiming to disrupt it. He emphasizes the importance of developing new ideas and how they can lead to changing conditions and improved development. Susskind concludes by providing his own opinions on what should be done regarding economic growth. He attempts to forge a path between extreme ideas while demonstrating that our society has the power to bring about change.

Growth is a comprehensive book on economics and its impacts on society today. Relevant to the politics and concerns we are currently facing, the book is well-organized and researched, with notes (references) and illustrations. Aimed at academic library users, *Growth* would be of interest to any reader seeking to learn about economic theory.

Reviewed by Breezy Silver, Michigan State University

The War Below: Lithium, Copper, and the Global Battle to Power Our Lives. Ernest Scheyder. New York: Atria/One Signal Publishers, 2024. 384 p. Hardcover $30.00 (ISBN: 9781668011805). Contact the publisher for ebook pricing (ISBN: 9781668011829).

In *The War Below: Lithium, Copper, and the Global Battle to Power Our Lives*, Ernest Scheyder offers a compelling, if somewhat misleadingly titled, journalistic exploration of the foundational raw materials driving the energy transition. The text, rather than depicting a "war," portrays a global scramble and reshuffling of priorities and interests among nations and corporations vying for critical mineral resources. Scheyder concludes that despite attempts "to find alternate ways to produce metals for the green energy transition, there was no way around the fact that mining is loud, dangerous, and disruptive and will remain so for the foreseeable future" (298).

Scheyder highlights the dilemma at the heart of our shift away from fossil fuels: the technologies designed to green our future—electric vehicles, solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries—are dependent on dirty and messy mining excavations. He highlights a common theme: no one wants these environmentally disruptive operations in their backyard, state, or even country, creating a significant hurdle for resource acquisition.

Scheyder avoids opining on the often-turbulent decision-making processes of the US government regarding mining policies. This approach, while lending a sense of objective reporting, leaves the reader curious about the potential influences of political shifts on these industries.

The author makes an important point about global equity, emphasizing that the Global South, particularly nations with histories of colonization and exploitation, cannot be expected to sacrifice their local environments solely to satisfy the demands of developed nations. This ethical consideration adds a murky layer to the complex narrative of resource extraction.

One notable omission in Scheyder's otherwise thorough analysis is a discussion of demand-side solutions. He does not suggest or even hint at decreasing demand through moderating or reducing consumption, an obvious avenue for discussion. While acknowledging the economic sensitivities surrounding this and related topics, their absence leaves a void in the search for long-term and big-picture solutions to our mineral dependency.

This book's in-depth, objective analysis of a critical contemporary issue makes it a valuable resource for academic libraries, particularly for programs in environmental studies, political science, business, economics, international relations, and engineering. *The War Below* will interest students, academics, policymakers, industry professionals, environmental advocates, and general readers.

Reviewed by Amy Jansen, Southern Connecticut State University