Foreword

*To get anywhere, or even to live a long time, a man has to guess, and guess right,
over and over again, without enough data for a logical answer.*

—Robert Heinlein

Guess what. Lack of data will no longer be the problem. To the contrary, the
challenge will be to use and manage enormous quantities of data effectively.
Covering many examples in personal and business life, *Inescapable Data* details
the coming data explosion and how it will be exploited in new and exciting
ways. It is about the far-reaching impact on a personal, work, and cultural level
when diverse technologies evolve and are brought together in life-altering ways.
Most importantly, it is about how it will impact you and those around you.

People generally fall into three camps when it comes to technology. Some
people love it and are fascinated with it. I am in this category. In my personal
life, I tend to be an early adopter of gadgetry, from computers and handheld
communication devices, to home electronics such as TiVo, to high-tech kitchen
gizmos such as remote-control cooking thermometers. In my professional life, I
deal with data protection and storage management and helping organizations
more effectively manage their ever-growing volumes of information.

Others hate technology or at least are highly suspicious of it. My brother-in-law, for example, avoids new technology and is often frustrated when he is forced to use it. He prefers tellers to ATM machines, full-service over self-service, and vinyl to CDs. He is particularly concerned about privacy rights and the potential for intrusion that the "online" world represents.

The majority of people fall into a third category. They take technology for granted and do not really think a whole lot about it. My wife belongs to this group. Like my brother-in-law, she does not seek out technology and often has a quizzical or skeptical look on her face when I try to get her interested in one of my new gadgets. Until she is fully convinced that this is going to make her life better or easier, she really is not interested. So, for example, she never warmed up to PDAs or programmable remote controls, but she loves cell phones and TiVo.

With *Inescapable Data*, Chris Stakutis and John Webster have produced a fascinating and thought-provoking book that has something for everyone, regardless of their disposition toward technology. The technophile will appreciate the authors' identification and analysis of how disparate technologies come together to create a whole that is far greater than the sum of its parts. Among the things I learned was the surprising connection between analyzing the genome sequence and fighting e-mail spam as well as about the many technological advances that will help us to manage the enormous growth of data.

The technophobe will be both disturbed and challenged by much of what he reads in this book. Inescapable Data is just that: *inescapable*. My brother-in-law will find it harder and harder to avoid its impact, such as the ability of stores to observe his patterns of movements and buying habits. His very real concerns about privacy and the opportunities for misuse of information are significant and must be addressed on a societal level. He will have to balance these concerns against the equally real opportunities for saving lives that Inescapable Data brings to the fields of medicine and national security.

The techno-agnostic will become enlightened. After scanning the first two chapters, my wife, who views technology strictly as a matter of convenience, immediately leapt upon the notion of how helpful it would be if she could check the contents of our pantry while she was at the supermarket. The authors have done an impressive job of providing examples of the impact Inescapable Data will have on medicine, manufacturing, sports, retail, and everyday life. You will come away from this book with a fresh perspective on the issues—both the positive and the negative.

Inescapable Data is all around us today; this book will help people spot its growing effect on their lives and prepare them to deal with it more effectively at home, at work, and at play. What will be the impact on your family, your job, your industry? Read on to find out.

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