



The Best American Infographics 2014

Gareth Cook (Introduction) , Nate Silver , Wendy MacNaughton (Contributor) , Maria Popova (Contributor) , Randall Munroe (Contributor) , Caroline Paul (Contributor)

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Year two of this fresh, timely, beautiful addition to the Best American series, introduced by Nate Silver

The rise of infographics across virtually all print and electronic media reveals patterns in our lives and worlds in fresh and surprising ways. As we find ourselves in the era of big data, where information moves faster than ever, infographics provide us with quick, often influential bursts of art and knowledge — to digest, tweet, share, go viral. *Best American Infographics 2014* captures the finest examples, from the past year, of this mesmerizing new way of seeing and understanding our world. Guest introducer Nate Silver brings his unparalleled expertise and lively analysis to this visually compelling new volume.

The Best American Infographics 2014 Details

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From Reader Review The Best American Infographics 2014 for online ebook

Laura says

The best infographics (and these are, as advertised, the best of the year) make you interested in a subject you didn't realize you had any interest in and make you understand something you've never understood. I pored over these pages and emerged bleary-eyed and enlightened. This book would make a great addition to any coffee table.

Kirsti says

Useful and beautiful informational graphics that cover everything from fastballs to bullets to the evolution of Justin Bieber's personal style.

Allie says

These were entertaining, but with all infographics I'm inherently skeptical. I loved seeing graphics that appeared in books I read last year, particularly Lost Cat and Picture Cook. There was a big section in the middle that I found totally boring, which is not something I remember feeling reading last year's collection.

Art says

Fun. An art book, data transformed into graphics, six dozen stories expressed as visuals. The best of these infographics snaps a story into place, quickly clarifying the data and relationships. Styles range from hand-drawn schematics to top-notch computer graphics.

This is an interesting study of how the brain processes information. Half of the brain processes images. Imagine a long text article that would explain each graphic, without the graphic. It's easy to see how these quick-grab visuals implant so efficiently.

Most tell a two-page story, although several foldouts appear. A four-page spread argues ammo as a greater problem than guns. Control the bullets and magazines, says these graphics, published by Wired. A sociogram reveals the recording networks of 1920s jazz musicians, with Louis Armstrong at the center. There's a matrix that shows caffeine drinks by their buzzy boost, from Scientific American. National Geographic, meanwhile, first published the three-page fascinating foldout showing the unmanned space flights since 1958. The clock of the seasons begins at the winter solstice then takes a year to sweep around. This is the boldest and most elegant graphic in this year's collection. Oh, and then there's the one about ...

Transit systems naturally lend themselves to interesting graphics. The London Underground famous schematic of 1931 gets an update here with each stop labeled by its aroma or sensation, a synesthesia tour. New York City transit time shows how long it takes to get from A to B. It is one of ten interactive graphics

in the book, with links. Also, it was one of two produced for radio. This one for WNYC by its data news team, another for NPR by its visuals group.

As we head toward the World Series, several baseball graphics explain the sport. One shows how to throw a fastball at 100 miles an hour. Another shows what fastballs look like to the batter. A third one, meanwhile, overlays the dimensions of all the ballparks, anchored on home plate. Another overlay graphic plots a hundred maps of The Midwest on top of each other, which results in a fuzzy definition of the region. Illinois is the most Midwest, with its surrounding states fleshing out the core.

This is the second year of this new annual. This year it avoided publishing two-page graphics into the bound page, which drew complaints last year because of unreadable data that fell through the cracks of the gutter. At twenty dollars, this is a good value for good thoughts, data and journalism expressed visually on high-quality art book paper.

Erica says

Who knew infographics could be so entertaining that they'd be compiled in a book?

Apparently, a lot of people because there's a 2013 edition and it must have sold enough copies to warrant a 2014 edition.

I love these little charts of information, these illustrated factoids, these instructions told through pictures. I'm just as slow-witted and short-attention-spanned as the next average American so having everything boiled down to a few words with helpful pictures makes it easier for me to understand stuff.

There's a recipe for kale salad in here that I've used twice, now. I've added to it, but it's a solid basic recipe. My niece hateHATES it because it's slimy to make but that's one of the reasons I love it so.

I stole this picture from someone off the internet. I'm too lazy to go back and find out whose it was and give proper credit. Man, I am the worst librarian in the world!

Cale says

This collection of Infographics covers a wide spread of topics, and many of the pieces are fascinatingly detailed with a bevy of different topics. In general, it's a fascinating collection, but there are a couple of issues:

- 1) The interactive infographics are impossible to portray in a manner that truly presents their depth. There was one, Arrested Development recurring jokes, that looked complete until you ran out of characters covered. It's a limitation of the form, and understandable but still disappointing.
- 2) For a book focused on making information easily readable, the choice of a color for the font that is literally unreadable in direct light from many angles makes little sense.

These aren't major complaints, but the sum didn't quite reach the heights I was expecting. There's lots of good information here, and I have found myself visualizing ways to present data in unique ways, which I credit directly to this book.

Julie G says

As much as I enjoyed this one, I'm not sure that it'll be added to my yearly collection. It's exactly how it sounds - a collection of the best infographics posted online and in various publications throughout the year. Some appealed to me more than others, just based on content (I'm never going to be really excited by anything related to sports), but that didn't diminish the quality. They're all well done, informative, and contained a great deal of information presented in a visually appealing way. I enjoyed the reading experience, but I think it's something I'll be fine picking up from the library and not owning personally.

Bruce says

A beautifully produced survey of the best infographics from US publications and websites, this book is not only captivating enough to hold the attention for hours of careful review, it's also reasonably priced! A large-format, high-production-value book for \$20?! Amazing.

Karen says

Spectacular book with a collection of the best info graphics, just like the title says. The introduction starts with a small but powerful and self-explanatory graphic of Ted Williams' strike zone depicted in an array of color-coded baseballs, and only gets better from there. The book shows off about a hundred awesome depictions of a wide variety of data and information put together in striking visuals, from wine pairings to dinosaurs and galaxies and Tom Brady's haircuts. I can attest that it takes a huge amount of time to make a graphic simple, and all of these are wonderful, wonderful. The large format and beautiful color printing enhance each example. Highly recommended to all data junkies and marketing gurus.

Along these lines, I nominate for next year's edition Warrant Sharp's analysis of Total Fumbles and Offensive Plans Run per Fumble

Gary Crossey says

Very engaging read.

The truth about infographics - they are useless unless the viewer is engaged. Spending time with an infographic and processing the information. Drawing your conclusions.

Before this book, I had an idea that infographics were a visual means to present information quickly. This book changed my view on infographics. Some infographics take longer to get the point across. And, that may be the point - the infographic is not there to be rushed. Infographics are most rewarding when you take the time to engage. Start where you want, read the parts you care to, take the parts of the data that interest you. Create your connections. These processes take time and require the viewer to reflect on the infographic.

The infographics included covering a broad range of topics and visual rendering.

Reuel says

My favorites infographics in this year's edition were:

The world as 100 People, pairing wine and food, The Game of Happiness, The Secret to Success is Starting Early, San Francisco as seen by a Cat & Imagined by a Cat Owner, Email: Not Dead-Evolving, English by the Book, Gay & in the Closet, Is your state's highest paid employee a coach? Probably, Hate [twitter] Maps, Raising the Debt Ceiling, The NSA's Vast Net, The Wheel of 65 Cheeses, The Literal Meaning [i.e. names] of States...okay, I really liked a lot of them.

Marc says

Big improvements over last year's collection, as they bumped up the size of the layout allowing you to actually enjoy and see a lot the graphics (even throwing in a few foldouts to boot). The option to go with a kind of silver metallic ink on white glossy paper made it almost impossible to read if the light caught the page just right, but this is not a book heavy on text. Quite a few of the images chosen felt like they were selected because the data itself or the research concept was intriguing but the actual graphic was not all that interesting. Also felt like more than a few graphics were basically the same approach to presenting data/visuals. Or maybe I'm just getting old and grumpy.

Bottom line: Better production/layout than the 2013 volume, but the visuals themselves seemed less impressive.

Becki Iverson says

I have always been a HUGE fan of infographics, so I was so excited when this book came out. I hope this becomes an annual tradition; I will definitely be keeping my eye out for more.

The best thing about infographics is that they're so unique and versatile. There really is no "right" way to create one, other than ensuring that it is the best way to depict the information that needs to be displayed and clarified. The selection chosen for this book display that very well - they represent a wide range of subject matter, design style, and publications.

This book really has a two-fold focus; one is the information represented by each infographic, and the other is the style of the infographic itself. There is a lot of information to be gleaned by reading each infographic, and the range in style is really inspiring.

Any graphic design fans who want to stay on top of their field should read this. Infographics are only going to grow in popularity and importance (thanks to social media and digital innovations), and it's a necessary skill set to have. I actually wish there would have been a course on adequately presenting quantitative data in my journalism degree coursework, with a focus on infographics - I could certainly use it now.

Philip says

I was in the bookstore... you know, going in to order a book, but the clerk was helping someone else. I decided to look around.

"Huh..."

"...I could totally use that picture/idea of the Midwest when I'm teaching my kids about regions, and how (unlike, say, states and countries) the borders aren't fixed. ...Too bad it's not online."

"...Huh..."

"...I could totally use that visualization of "The Word as 100 People" by Jack Hagley when I teach about standard of living, or urbanization, literacy rate, religion, population density... ..huh... Too bad it's not online."

So, while I was waiting I picked up my allegedly "smart" phone. Pressed a couple non-buttons and ***SHAZAAM!!!*** Turns out they *are* online. Of course, I didn't have 20 bucks.

I ordered my book and left thinking: man... that would be great for the classroom. It's full of ideas. It's social studies meets math meets art meets science. Of course, language arts saturates *everything*. Too bad I don't have 20 bucks. I guess I could have bought it instead of the book I went in for, but that was a book club book, and I ordered it for 6.

So, I went to the school and asked if the block had any spare change lying around for a book I wanted. Not much, but they gave me \$20.

When I went to pick up *my* book, I got this one as well. And boy, was it worth it.

In scrolling through the reviews I saw a couple people complain that the infographics are made for computers, not books. Whatever. The depictions in here are beautiful. Furthermore - and this is maybe the best part - they're almost all online. The book is just a starting point, directing you to the infographics - especially in cases like the interactive ones, like NPR's Chart of Arrested Development Jokes. Of course, if you're an Arrested Development fan, and haven't seen that chart before, I'd submit you're not really an Arrested Development fan.

Of course, I'm a social studies teacher, and I'd never heard of Map Stack before. ...That doesn't mean that I'm not a ----- let's just stop that thought in its tracks...

Side note: While writing this review, I got sidetracked on Map Stack for like... an hour... It's interesting.

*Another side note: I'm not ignoring my kids right now, they're in the room playing. They're "camping." ...In

princess dresses...*

My point is, yeah: a lot of these would be better to view on a computer. But it's not like they're bad in the book. And you can get to them on the computer. In fact, so many people have smart phones now, that it's adding value to the infographic in other ways. For instance, I had seen this one making the rounds a while ago:

I had also seen the Jim Calhoun video. But because the book mentions the video, I watched it right after seeing the infographic, and it was nice (again, adding value) seeing them back-to-back.

Could I have gone to the book store, taken screen shots of the infographics I liked the best, come home and looked at them online? Yes. But what kind of experience is that? And what kind of crappy book-store patron would that make me?

Finally, if you know me, you're probably aware of my feelings about standardized tests: I don't mind them.

(It's true, I do hate what they've become, and what they stand for. I hate that we use a test that's supposed to measure student achievement to instead measure teacher quality. I hate that this has lead to teaching-to-the-test, drill and kill, outright cheating, or at least gaming the system, school grades that bounce from A one year to D the next up to B... What's that supposed to tell us? Yes, this list could be very long... But I don't hate standardized tests.)

It's easy to make multiple choice questions based off factual recall.

17. Who developed Cuneiform?

- a. The Sumerians
- b. The Mesopotamians
- c. The Egyptians
- d. The Babylonians

(Ok... This is maybe another one of my problems with standardized tests... sometimes you'll get a question like that one and say... uhhh... weren't The Sumerians also Mesopotamians? ...Who can you ask about that? Nobody.)

Back to the point: it's easy to write questions like that. They're easy to answer. (As long as you know what's going to be asked.)

Questions drawn from these infographics show us much more, though.

Can they read it? Can they analyze it? Can they interpret it?

I don't know if this book has everything for everybody (unless you're a teacher or a renaissance ~~man~~ person... always fighting the patriarchy...), but it certainly has *something* no, **LOTS** for everybody: sports, music, art,

food, taxes, billionaires, birds, lion attacks, drone attacks, Everest attacks, earthquakes, cosmos, surfers, cheese. Working, playing, kissing, guns. Bourbon, T-Rex, spying, TV.

Yeah, it's awesome.

Wayne McCoy says

'The Best American Infographics 2014' is a mind-boggling compendium of facts distilled down to image form. This collection represents the best of the past year in this art and data form for America.

The book is divided into four categories: You, Us, Material World and Interactive. The infographics range all over the place. A circular graph shows various cheeses based on source and hardness or softness. The same circle is used to show how long a song takes to reach the charts in various categories of music. There is an underground map with stations named after the flavors a man with synesthesia associates with them. There are charts for baseball and animal droppings and wine pairings and Justin Bieber. It just goes on and each one is beautiful and interesting.

I spent lots of time soaking this book in. The ability to distill large data into something easier to digest and elegant is truly an interesting modern artform. There are infographics from major publications, but also from blogs. I really enjoyed this book.

I received a review copy of this ebook from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to read this beautiful ebook.
