

The 2013 Highlands Forum Reading List

Just in time for the holiday season, we are proud to present 2013 Highlands Reading List. This year we feature twenty-one books, six of them recommended by our distinguished guest reviewers. Our panel of guest editors for 2013 includes **Lawrence Wright**, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author for his book, *The Looming Tower*; **Peter Ho**, the former Singaporean Secretary of Defence and Secretary of Foreign Affairs; **Melanie Greenberg** President and CEO of the global association, the Alliance for Peacebuilding; **George Dyson**, author and historian of technology; **Richard Bookstaber**, economist and author; and **Ann Pendleton-Jullian**, author, architect and designer.

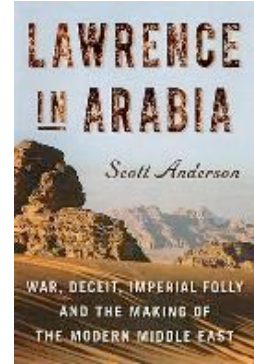
Many of our book titles are current non-fiction addressing timely themes; some are timeless classics worth discovering for the first time; two are works of fiction to stretch the imagination. They have been selected for their themes and for their capacity to broaden our understanding of emerging issues and inform the way we think about things. We began compiling an annual list in 2000, and it is a continuing work—additional titles are added during the year and compiled at the end of each year in a larger list. Please click [here](#) to search our previous annual reading lists.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY OUR GUEST EDITORS

NON-FICTION

Lawrence Wright is a multi-talented author, screenwriter, playwright, musician, and staff writer for the *New Yorker* magazine. Larry received the Pulitzer Prize for his 2006 book, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*, which was featured on this list. His most recent book (reviewed in our list, below), *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief*, is a finalist for this year's National Book Award; it is based on a profile he wrote of the writer-director Paul Haggis in *The New Yorker*, which won the National Magazine Award in 2012. His one-man play, *My Trip to al-Qaeda*, was performed in New York and Washington and was made into a documentary film for HBO. In addition to his exceptional writing, Larry finds time to play keyboards in a Texas blues band called "Who Do". A number of us in DC were able to catch Who Do perform, and found Larry enjoying a great night with the band and his friend, CBS newsman and host of *Face the Nation*, Bob Schieffer, taking a star turn on lead vocals. What a night.

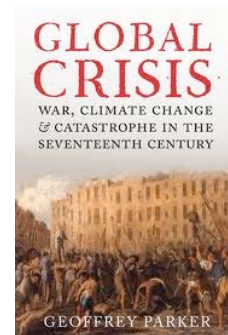
He tells us: "My nomination is ***Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East*** by Scott Anderson. It is a masterly retelling of the story of T.E. Lawrence and the making of the modern Middle East. Anderson interweaves other biographies into the story; notably, that of Curt Prufer, a German master spy, and his Zionist counterpart, Aaron Aaronsohn. But it is Lawrence in all his brilliance, complexity, and duplicity who looms over this dangerous underworld. The consequences of their rivalry are seen in the headlines of today".



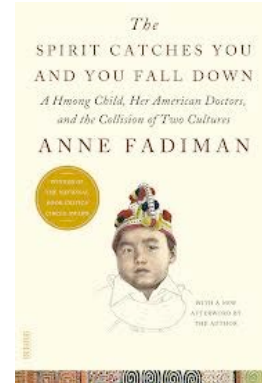
Peter Ho has had a long and distinguished career in government in Singapore. When he retired from the Singapore Administrative Service in 2010 after a career in the Public Service stretching more than 34 years, he was Head, Civil Service, concurrent with his other appointments of Permanent Secretary (Foreign Affairs), Permanent Secretary (National Security and Intelligence Coordination), and Permanent Secretary (Special Duties) in the Prime Minister's Office. Before that, he was Permanent Secretary (Defence). He is currently the Senior Advisor to the Centre for Strategic Futures. He is also a Senior Fellow in the Civil Service College and is an Adjunct Professor with the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, and a Visiting Fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. His most significant role these days is in helping to chart the future of Singapore as Chairman of the Urban Redevelopment Authority. Peter is widely sought after for his counsel and is also a member of the National University Board of Trustees, an advisor to the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, a member of Nanyang Technological University's Complexity Advisory Board, a council member of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, and a Society Fellow of the Asia and the Pacific Policy Society. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Engineering Singapore.

Peter's book recommendation for us is ***Global Crisis: War, Climate Change & Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century***, by Geoffrey Parker. Peter tells us: "In his massive book, *Global Crisis*, the historian Geoffrey Parker studies the link between the Little Ice Age, and the turbulence that defined the 17th century. The first order effects of a drop in temperature of 1.5°C during this period included droughts and floods. These in turn led to second order effects such as crop failure, disease and famine. But third order effects were much more dire. Ignorant government policies, and warfare that depleted already scarce food resource, compounded the social and economic upheavals that accompanied climate-related catastrophes. Revolution, civil unrest and conflict became the overlay to disease and starvation. This was the 'general crisis' of the 17th century that touched the whole world, from China, India, Japan, and Indonesia in Asia, and to the west, the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and Europe, even the Americas. The consequences were death and devastation on a global scale. Parker assembles detailed evidence from many fields of study to show, convincingly, how the Little Ice Age led to this general crisis. Today, the world is experiencing a rise in global

temperatures. The fifth report of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, just issued in September, describes the warming of the global climate system as unequivocal. While this warming may be the opposite of the freeze of Little Ice Age, Parker's book serves as a warning that if we do nothing to arrest the trend, then the world could face another general crisis, but with even more dreadful and longer term consequences".



Melanie Cohen Greenberg is President and CEO of the Alliance for Peacebuilding, a global membership association of more than seventy peacebuilding organizations, 1,000 professionals, and a network of more than 15,000 people developing processes for change in the most complex, chaotic conflict environments around the world. Before joining the AfP, she was the President and Founder of the Cypress Fund for Peace and Security, a foundation making grants in the areas of peacebuilding and nuclear nonproliferation. From 2003 to 2004, she was a visiting scholar at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies, focusing on issues of justice in post-conflict peacebuilding. From 2000 to 2002, Melanie was director of the Conflict Resolution Program at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. She previously served as associate director of the Stanford Center for International Security and Cooperation and deputy director of the Stanford Center on International Conflict and Negotiation. In her work on international conflict resolution, Melanie has helped design and facilitate public peace processes in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, and the Caucasus. She has taught advanced courses in international conflict resolution, multi-party conflict resolution, and negotiation at Stanford Law School and Georgetown University Law Center. She was lead editor and chapter author of the volume *Words over War: Mediation and Arbitration to Prevent Deadly Conflict*. Melanie is a member of the International Advisory Board of the United States Institute of Peace and is on the board of the Institute of World Affairs. Melanie holds an AB from Harvard and a JD from Stanford Law School.



Melanie's book recommendation is ***The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures***, by Anne Fadiman. Melanie tells us: "In the introduction to her book *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, the journalist Anne Fadiman writes: 'I have always felt that the action most worth watching is not at the center of things but where the edges meet. I like shorelines, weather systems, and international borders. There are interesting frictions and incongruences in these places, and often, if you stand at the point of tangency, you can see both sides better than if you were in the middle of either one'. It is through this lens of storm clouds and borders that Fadiman brings to light an extraordinarily powerful story of love, medical tragedy, and cross-cultural misunderstanding. 'The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down' is the Hmong phrase for epilepsy. The book focuses on Lia Lee, the fourteenth child of Foua and Nao Kao Lee, who fled Laos and settled with their family in Merced, California, a hub of the Hmong community in the United States. Lia developed epilepsy in infancy, yet her first two seizures were misdiagnosed at Merced Community Medical Center because there were no Hmong translators on staff. The doctors later recalled that they were reduced to practicing 'veterinary medicine' in the absence of communication with Lia's parents. Over the next four years, the Lee family and Lia's doctors played an increasingly desperate tug of war over Lia and her care. Foua and Nao Kao, illiterate in both English and Hmong, were unable to follow the complex instructions for Lia's ever-shifting drug regimen, and they insisted, with some truth, that the Western drugs made her worse (they preferred that Lia be treated by the local shaman -- a powerful healer who could bridge the human and spirit worlds). Lia's doctors, who wanted no part of shamanism, finally put Lia in foster care, when they felt the Lees could not be trusted to comply with Lia's medical plan. The results were heart breaking -- yet predictable -- and the aftermath is a tremendously powerful testament to parental love and a culture that ties body to spirit in unfamiliar ways. Fadiman relates this history with great sensitivity and compassion, alternating chapters focusing on Lia's story, with fascinating background on the Hmong and their migration out of Laos, to inhospitable enclaves within the United States. The magic of this book lies not only in the gripping nature of Lia's story, but in its power as a perfect metaphor for the dangers of cross-cultural ignorance and misunderstanding. Fadiman gently pushes for a spirit of compromise and bridge-building that will serve anyone who has ever reached over a cultural divide".

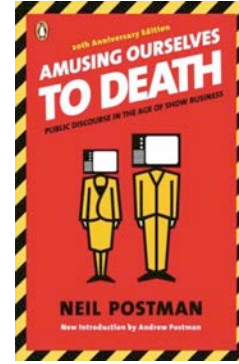
George Dyson is a remarkable historian and author whose books have a way of not only telling us where we are and where we are going, but invariably the more fascinating back-story of how we got there. Three of his books have been featured on our annual list over the past fifteen years. He is also a boat builder, designer, and historian of technology whose interests have included the evolution of digital computing and telecommunications (*Darwin Among the Machines*, 1997) and a path not taken into space (*Project Orion*, 2002). His latest book, featured on last year's annual list, *Turing's Cathedral: The Origins of the Digital Universe* (2012), illuminates the transition from numbers that *mean* things to numbers that *do* things in the aftermath of World War II. His early adventures, contrasted with those of his father, physicist Freeman Dyson, were the subject of Kenneth Brower's classic 1978 dual biography *The Starship and the Canoe*.

George's book selection for us this year is ***The Lost Art Of Finding Our Way*** by John Edward Huth (Belknap Press, Cambridge MA, 2013). He tells us: "Nominally a book about the theory and practice of navigation on land and sea without instruments, this is one of those books, beautifully written and destined to become a classic, that you can open to any page and immediately learn something from--while being drawn to the next page. From Polynesian seafaring to how to get un-lost in the woods, it is all here, with the necessary underlying principles of meteorology, astronomy, topography, wave diffraction, and even human behavior clearly explained. As a young teenager dreaming about running away to sea, I purchased a copy of Nathaniel Bowditch's *American Practical Navigator* and studied every page. John Huth has produced a sort of Bowditch for the rest of us. You cannot read this book without dreaming about finding yourself somewhere else (whether on the other side of town or the other side of an ocean) and being able to find your way back".



Richard Bookstaber worked on Wall Street at Bridgewater Associates, ran the Quantitative Equity Fund at FrontPoint Partners, and was in charge of risk management at Moore Capital. In the investment-banking arena, he was in charge of firm-wide risk at Salomon Brothers. He also spent ten years at Morgan Stanley, first designing derivatives, doing proprietary trading, and then as the firm's first market risk manager. Out of this deep investment and risk experience came his acclaimed and prophetic book, *A Demon of Our Own Design*, which appeared on our 2011 annual reading list. Rick is also the author of three other books and scores of articles on finance, ranging from option theory to risk management. He has won the Graham and Dodd Scroll from the Financial Analysts Federation and the Roger F. Murray Award from the Institute for Quantitative Research in Finance for his research. Rick is currently a Research Principal in the Office of Financial Research, and was Senior Policy Adviser to the Financial Stability Oversight Council and Senior Policy Adviser at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Rick was a Fulbright Scholar and Visiting Professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem and received his Ph.D. in economics from MIT.

Rick's selection for us calls to mind the wisdom of Andy Marshall, who long ago told us, "If you want a new idea, read an old book". Taking that thought to heart, Rick recommends Neil Postman's classic 1985 work, ***Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business***. Rick tells us, "I first read *Amusing Ourselves to Death* shortly after it was published in 1985. I reread it this year because its themes kept coming to mind over the past decade as I have watched the Internet and then smart phones move us toward an increasingly connected, real-time and yet superficial culture. The book is focused on how the content of our discourse and our mode of thinking have changed as they have been expressed first with books, then with the telegraph, and finally with television. The message of the book can be extended frighteningly to the new modes of communication of our current age. The telegraph introduced the transmission of real-time information and with that came the concept of 'the news of the day', news as entertainment and as, literally, a media event. The telegraph turned the country into one neighborhood, but as Postman shows, one populated with strangers who knew only superficial facts about each other. The telegraph is only a precursor to the central theme of the book, 'an inquiry into and a lamentation about the most significant American cultural fact of the second half of the twentieth century: the decline of the Age of Typography and the ascendancy of the Age of Television. This changeover has dramatically and irreversibly shifted the content and meaning of public discourse, since two media so vastly different cannot accommodate the same ideas'. *Amusing Ourselves to Death* is a bridge between two other books, one published fifty years earlier, the other twenty-five years later. The first is Lewis Mumford's *Technics and Civilization*, which gives an historical look at how our technical world shapes our culture – how, for example, the clock turned us first into time keepers, then time savers, and finally time-servers. The second is Jaron Lanier's *You Are Not a Gadget*, essentially a very readable philosophical treatise on the impact of on-line collectivism".



FICTION

The one work of fiction from our guest reviewers this year comes from **Ann Pendleton-Jullian**. Ann is an architect, educator, game designer, and writer of international standing. As a writer, Pendleton-Jullian has most recently finished a manuscript, *Design Unbound*, with co-author John Seely Brown, that presents a new tool set for designing within complex systems and on complex problems endemic to the 21st century. She has been the Director of the Knowlton School of Architecture at the Ohio State University and is currently on sabbatical at Georgetown University where she is Distinguished Visiting Professor of Design while working with the university President and faculty to redesign the university and the education experience. Her design work negotiates the overlap between architecture, landscape, culture, and technology and is motivated towards internationalism as both a concept and a reality. Pendleton-Jullian obtained her B.Arch degree from Cornell University and her M.Arch from Princeton. She began her professional apprenticeship in Chicago and in the mid eighties, opened her first professional office in Los Angeles. Back on the east coast, she also began teaching at Cornell University, Princeton University and then later at MIT for fourteen years. Her most recent work has focused on furthering the use of game design as a way to approach complex and emergent systems within architectural, urban and landscape design, both theoretically and in practice. Seeing education as its own design problem, she is also involved in thinking and writing about education for the 21st century, in practice. In her book, *Four (+1) Studios*, Pendleton-Jullian presents her thoughts on design and design thinking, the social environment of practice of the studio, and how the architectural design studio and its methodologies have evolved over time to respond to evolving social environments and practices. Pendleton-Jullian maintains ongoing working affiliations with the MIT Media Lab, the School of Architecture at the Catholic University of Santiago, Chile, The University of Porto Alegre, Brazil, Tongji University in Shanghai, the New University of Singapore, and the London School of Economics.

Ann's recommendation for us is David Mitchell's award-winning debut novel, ***Ghostwritten***. Ann tells us:

“When I first read *Ghostwritten* by David Mitchell it was the summer of 2001. The unfolding implications of the world we were navigating and negotiating were yet unforeseen. Both expansive and intimate, I was mesmerized by the way it presented the 21st century as a truly global co-existence that is lived and linked fractally. Nine narratives with eight narrators, seven of which are human - a terrorist cult member in Okinawa, a record-shop clerk in Tokyo, a money-laundering British lawyer in Hong Kong, an old Buddhist woman running a tea shack in China, a gallery attendant art thief in Petersburg, a drummer in London, a female physicist hiding from the CIA in Ireland, and a late-night radio deejay in New York. The eighth character is a transmigrating noncorpore entity in search of his origin. Like a book within a book, the ‘ghost’ narrator inhabits different hosts – different stories – with purpose but little control over events in a world that is governed by chance and complex forces. Coincidentally (or not) this story is at the center of the book, it has a resolute ending unlike the others, and it chooses one side of a conflict to land on; and it is the least satisfying of the stories because of this. Like the Iñárritu/Ariago movie *Babel* released in 2006, *Ghostwritten* shows us the churning within our human ecosphere by connecting diverse geo-cultural points through characters that are wrestling with unique but universally replicable personal events. Unlike *Babel* though, themes that transmigrate from story to story end up dominating over ‘characters’ as the novel wrestles with uneasy existential paradoxes set in motion by the dynamics of our modern world. And *Ghostwritten* does ‘wrestle’. It does not resolve. Unlike *Cloud Atlas*, Mitchell’s more mature novel, this, his first novel, does not drive towards resolutions. Instead it grapples with the illusiveness of meaning in the same way we find ourselves grappling on the ground and in the field with the forces of the increasingly global and technologically amplified world around us. Reading *Ghostwritten* is like trying to mentally hold onto the shape of a cloud or put together a jigsaw puzzle where half way through you suspect that the pieces are actually from several different but eerily similar puzzles. It is not *Cloud Atlas*, considered to be Mitchell’s masterpiece, deftly crafted and full of complexly woven themes put to purpose. Instead, less polished, it sits in that liminal space between sleeping and awake when the strange seems familiar, the fantastic seems plausible, and confusion shows connections”.



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE HIGHLANDS FORUM STAFF

FICTION

The Circle

by Dave Eggers



The Circle arrives in the midst of a real-world international brouhaha over the compilation of personal, governmental, and corporate data by a three-letter government agency. It can't get any worse, can it? Dave Eggers, in this somewhat dystopian satire of the near future, tells us that maybe it can. The merging of the major social media, search, and 140 character connectors into one company that holds all the personal information one could imagine (or fear), with three personalities forming the founding leadership trinity of "wise men" (who might your instincts tell you that they are, or what amalgam of Jobs, Zuckerberg, Ellison, Page, Brin, Dorsey traits are emodied here?), makes for a compelling, sometimes disturbing, and fun look at the information culture that continues to evolve.

NON-FICTION

Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think

By Victor Mayer-Schonberger and Kenneth Cukier

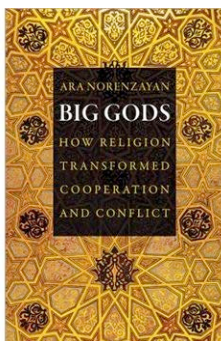


Transitioning from the fiction work relating to data and how it has/will transform us (*The Circle*), data seems to be a major theme this year. In their overview of the world of

data providers and users, Victor Mayer-Schonberger and Kenneth Cukier take us on a journey of great timeliness through the world of data surveillance. In earlier HF reading lists we reviewed two books which, compared with *Big Data*, almost seem to come from a simpler, more innocent time: *The Signal and the Noise*, by Nate Silver, and *Moneyball*, by Michael Lewis. *Moneyball* describes how Billy Beane, the GM of the Oakland Athletics, sets out to build a championship competitive team, year after year, even though Oakland has one of the lowest payroll teams in MLB, using statistical data to construct a baseball team using rational decision making principles. Silver's story is somewhat cautionary and transitions us to *Big Data*: he tells us early on, "*We face danger whenever information growth outpaces our understanding of how to process it...Data-driven predictions can succeed-and they can fail. It is when we deny our role in the process that the odds of failure raise. Before we demand more of our data, we need to demand more of ourselves*". Mayer-Schonberger and Cukier dial up the level of concern and give the newspaper articles we are reading about the perils of trusting governments and corporations with too much personal data greater depth. They point out the advantages to sharing data, some of which we thought we understood, in making our lives richer while extending our personal reach across the globe to people like us, or to people we want to "like". But they go more heavily into the dark side with insights into data predictive of personal behavior, and the shaping of behavior, which they argue we are sliding into blithely unaware, or at best hoping for the best intentions of others when it comes to the use of that data. And they caution us to understand what we are giving up, intentionally or not, lest we succumb to the worst intentions and uses of those with the tools to rend "meaning", "beliefs", and "intentions" from the data—before we even form them.

Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict

By Ara Norenzayan

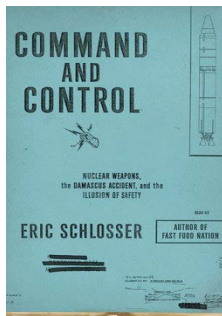


For the past decade, the Highlands Forum has entertained a series of conversations leading to an understanding of an alternative spectrum of conflict which has been labeled "The Three C's" (cooperation, competition, and conflict). The idea was to examine the evolution of institutions and compacts as they changed in relation to the recent information revolution. But, as we learn in Professor Norenzayan's recent book, *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*, the evolution of

cooperation, competition, and conflict scale of actions can be found in other interesting sectors of human activity. We even see the evolution in ways that echo the two decade long work of David Ronfeldt in his [T+I+M+N framework](#). And in the historical and theological context provided by Norezayan, we get a very different and fascinating way of approaching this understanding of religion and its impact on human behavior. Big Gods, not surprisingly, are the Gods of major religions that have spread around the world over the millennia. Like Ronfeldt, Norezayan concerns himself with how we evolved our institutions beginning with small, tight-knit groups or tribes, and became more complex and sophisticated. The Big Gods were the focus of this complexification as religion and morality began to be seen as one. In that case gods took on a role to that point in history unseen—Norezayan asks “Did cooperation among strangers intensify and expand partly because of the cultural spread of sincere faith in these Big Gods that monitor and punish wrongdoers and free riders even when no one is watching?” This is a Big Idea book, one worth reading, as it challenges what we believe and how we arrived at those beliefs, and suggests how we act in a world held together and apart by those beliefs.

Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Incident, and the Illusion of Safety

By Eric Schlosser

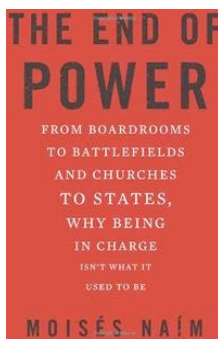


If you are intrigued enough to pick up and read this ripping story, you might wonder if we mistakenly placed it in the non-fiction section of the annual reading list. No, this is non-fiction at its most exciting and vexing, cloaked in the style of a thriller. We were tipped off to this terrific book by Bob Scott and immediately went to check it out. The title is deceptively mundane: sounds more like a government report than a retelling of an incident (and other harrowing accidents as well) that would make your hair stand up. The *New Yorker* magazine referred to it as the “*Nukes of Hazard*”. Among them were cases of bombs falling from airplanes (unintentionally), incinerating in airplane crashes, or just lost on the ground or at sea. The “Damascus Incident” referred to in the book’s title involves a nuclear warhead that was ejected when a maintenance person fumble-fingered a wrench and it tore through the fuel tank. What is the worst that could happen from dropping a tool? What Charles Perrow nominally calls “normal accidents” in highly complex systems with additional safeguards built in, come to mind here. This is

a compelling, and nerve-wracking story, which at its heart makes one wonder about the wisdom of the systems we built to protect these weapons of mass destruction—that on any given day the likelihood was greater of one detonating as the result of an accident than by being launched by one side or the other. The sense of unanticipated outcomes rivals the miscalculations of nuclear rivals’ capabilities for the most unsettling aspect of this book. Absolutely a must read, a holiday gift for someone on your list, or for yourself.

The End of Power: From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches, to States, Why Being in Charge Isn’t What It Used to Be

By Moises Naim

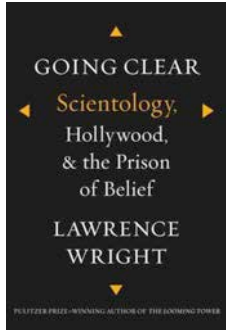


Moises Naim, former Finance Minister of Venezuela and author of the international best-selling book *Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers, and Copycats are Hijacking the Global Economy* (reviewed on our annual reading list in 2005 by guest reviewer David Rothkopf), has delivered another timely and valuable book, ominously titled: *The End of Power*. As Naim would tell you, power is not ending, but rather it is changing, and it is decaying and diffusing away from large institutions that have wielded it for centuries to smaller groups and in many cases, to individuals—*“Power is spreading, and long-established, big players are increasingly being challenged by newer and smaller ones. And those who have power are more constrained in the ways they can use it”*. We all can sense this—we read about it, we watch it before our eyes on a daily basis. But why is it changing and changing so rapidly as well? Naim cites three revolutions underway simultaneously that interact with and influence each other in novel ways and are resulting in this unsettling juxtaposition: the More revolution, the Mobility revolution, and the Mentality revolution. More deals simply with quantity increases in everything—more people, more countries, more institutions, more connections....and more. Mobility clearly means that our means of connecting are mobile, as we are mobile and global, and our ideas and exchanges are rapid and loosed upon the world instantaneously—what happens to “place” and anchoring in the world when everything is mobile? The Mentality revolution, the hardest to pin down, and yet perhaps the most important, reflects the change in *“mindsets, expectations, and aspirations that have accompanied these shifts”*. Naim asks the big question and then provides an answer that propels this important book: *“What happens when power is radically scattered,*

diffuse, and decayed? The philosophers already knew the answer: chaos and anarchy”.

Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood & the Prison of Belief

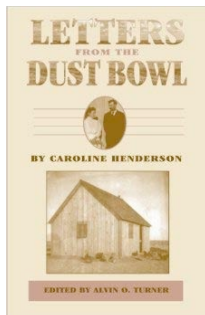
By Lawrence Wright



Lawrence Wright, a Highlands Forum alumnus and Pulitzer Prize-winner for his great book *The Looming Tower* (a recommended book on our 2006 reading list), has produced another masterful book this year with *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, & the Prison of Belief*, a 2013 National Book Award finalist. This is not an attack on the Church of Scientology, though it is a measured indictment the church and its founder, science fiction author and motivational speaker L. Ron Hubbard. What the church has become known for more recently is its seeming sway over a number of Hollywood celebrities, among them Tom Cruise, John Travolta, and Sonny Bono. Wright checks into this part of the story in a particularly detailed fashion, with church members, most particularly with multiple Oscar-winning screenwriter Paul Haggis, best known for the 2004 Best Picture, *Crash* and *Million Dollar Baby* (2004). Haggis joined Scientology in 1975, when he was a young man, and left many years later after bouts of conscience with church positions and with what he witnessed inside the deeply cloaked and mysterious entity that he considered abhorrent. As a witness for Wright, Haggis is compelling. Wright is one of our finest writers in America today and he conveys the strange world inside Scientology in credible and often jarring fashion. This book is on just about every list this year—it should be on yours as well.

Letters from the Dust Bowl

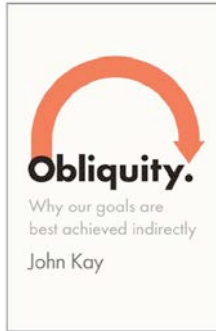
By Caroline Henderson



Cautionary tales often come in the most unexpected ways and from the least likely sources. Caroline Henderson was the wife of an Oklahoma farmer in the decades of the devastating Dust Bowl that changed the American economy; changed the map as it moved mass migrations of unsettled populations who became derisively termed (and derisively treated) “Okies”; and changed the social compact with the federal government. For three decades Caroline and her husband farmed, while in her spare time she wrote eloquent, and often haunting letters to friends; she wrote articles published by Atlantic Monthly beginning in 1931, and their harrowing tale of the death of farming and communities in the Plains states eventually caught the attention of the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. That seems unthinkable in an age of instantaneous digital communication, but information traveled slowly and letters were the medium. Caroline, in addition to being a farmer, was a graduate of the esteemed Mount Holyoke College with a degree in literature, and it is through her painful, descriptive letters, that we “see, smell, and taste” the damage done by overfarming plots of land, drought, high temperatures, and massive winds rolling across the plains, damage that continued for years. Caroline writes: *“Dear Evelyn: Since I wrote to you, we have had several bad days of wind and dust. On the worst one recently, old sheets stretched over door and window openings, and sprayed with kerosene, quickly became black and helped a little to keep down the irritating dust in our living rooms. Nothing that you see or hear or read will be likely to exaggerate the physical discomfort or material losses due to these storms. Less emphasis is usually given to the mental effect, the confusion of mind resulting from the overthrow of all plans for improvement or normal farm work, and the difficulty of making other plans, even in a tentative way...of an incident of the past week, the attempt of former neighbors to sell the pipe from the well on their now deserted homestead. This may not seem significant to you. But to old-timers in this deep-water country, so nearly destitute of flowing streams, the virtual destruction of a well of our excellent, life-nourishing water comes close to being the unpardonable sin against future generations”*. This is a beautiful, dire, and thought-provoking book, written with a literacy seldom found in contemporary letters; it is also a warning of the swift and unrelenting, unsympathetic change to be wrought in the blink of an eye by nature. Most highly recommended.

Obliquity: Why Our Goals Are Best Achieved Indirectly

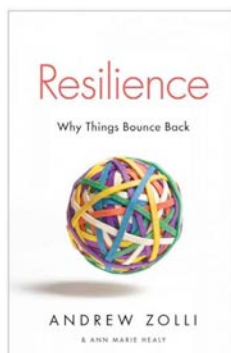
By John Kay



Dave Snowden, well known at the Highlands Forum for presentations on complex problems and his Cynefin Framework to address them, has been telling us for some time about a book called *Obliquity: Why Our Goals are Best Achieved Indirectly*. This is a small book with a big return—a book with a premise so self-evident that one could ask why write it at all, yet most people don't think the way its author, John Kay, lays out in this excellent volume. First, what is obliquity? Kay unabashedly gives credit to Nobel Prize-winning pharmacologist Sir James Black; Black told him of his team's discoveries by a circuitous, unplanned, and indirect route. Kay relays to us: *"Goals are often best achieved without intending them...In obliquity there are no predictable connections between intentions and outcomes...Problem solving is iterative and adaptive rather than direct.* Incorporating philosophy, management science, case studies, and common sense, Kay finishes this slim and very approachable volume with a useful summary for those encountering more difficult (and frequently occurring in the wild) classes of problems: *"Obliquity is the best approach whenever complex systems evolve in an uncertain environment and whenever the effect of our actions depends on the ways in which others respond to them".*

Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back

By Andrew Zolli & Ann Marie Healy

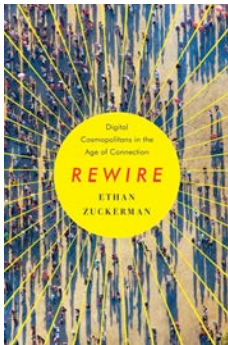


Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy taught us many things, and perhaps the most frequently heard term emanating from the lessons learned discussions in the months and years since each event was "resilience". The Rockefeller Foundation's major effort now underway is the Resilient Cities Challenge; cities are beginning to appoint Chief

Resilience Officers. Andrew Zollie and Ann Marie Healy, in their wonderful book *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*, tell us: “If we cannot control the volatile tides of change, we can learn to build better boats. We can design—and redesign—organizations, institutions, and systems to better absorb disruption, operate under a wider variety of conditions, and shift more fluidly from one circumstance to the next. To do that, we need to understand the emerging field of resilience”. Ann Pendleton-Jullian has encouraged us to think of resilience in terms of ecology; both she and Zollie & Healy would frame resilience as the capacity of a system, enterprise, or a person to maintain its core purpose and integrity in the face of dramatically changed conditions; they would also likely maintain that resilience does mean that after a disruption, a resilient system returns to its original state just prior to the disruption, but rather to *some* state of successful function or operation. They use contemporary examples and stories to demonstrate the differences (and there are differences) among redundancy, robustness, recovery, and resilience; and they make it clear that resilience must be a continuous process if it is to succeed. As a bonus for Highlands readers, Zollie and Healy cite examples and sources (John Arquilla, David Ronfeldt, Bob Axelrod, Valdis Krebs, Eric Rasmussen, and Robert Kirkpatrick) that many forum participants will recognize from their work with us over the years.

Rewire: Digital Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Connection

By Ethan Zuckerman

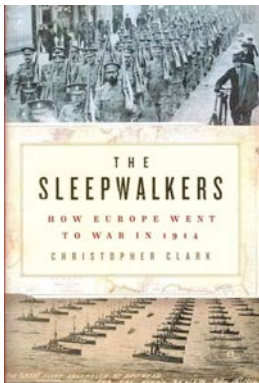


Ethan Zuckerman comes at you in so many interesting and unique ways: he is your imagination on its best day, discovering something new and exciting; he is your vision of what you could hope to do in helping humanity, spreading hope and possibilities in digital villages around the world; he is your conscience, unafraid to tell you (albeit nicely) when you are off-base. Ethan is your ideal dinner guest, a plus at any forum. *Rewired* is a celebration of Ethan Zuckerman’s hope for us, the world, and a more cosmopolitan outlook. What does he mean by digital cosmopolitanism? Ethan, who has spent considerable time in his young life in Ghana, cites a Ghanaian American philosopher, Kwame Anthony Appiah, who sees cosmopolitanism as much more than tolerance (by ignoring or turning away from practices that offend us) of those with beliefs and values different from our own. On the contrary, Appiah celebrates the differences by taking an interest in the beliefs of others and through this

cosmopolitanism he is “taking seriously the notion that (we) have obligations to people who are not their kin” and are different. Here is Ethan’s worldview on display in all its openness and richness. But alas, it may not be for too many of us. While the Internet provides us an opportunity to practice digital cosmopolitanism, for most it is rather an opportunity to anchor to firmly held beliefs and worldview. For most, there is no desire to become an explorer in the (digital) Explorer’s Club. Ethan challenges us to open ourselves to the possibilities and make connections; if only we were lucky enough to have him at dinner, or on our shoulders whispering in our ear. At least we have him whenever we need encouragement, in the pages of *Rewire*.

The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914

By Christopher Clark

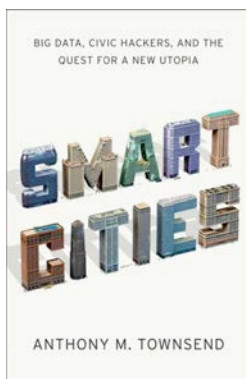


Highlands Forum alumnus, Bob Belden, the highly creative Grammy Award-winning jazz composer and arranger of the jazz symphony *The Black Dahlia*, has a broad range of reading interests. Bob frequently sends us suggestions for a book he has just finished, and each is provocative and challenging. In our last discussion he was most enthusiastic in suggesting we might be interested in a new history: *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*. He said: “It is an amazing book, with great detail about the eventuality of war among European powers at the turn of the century. Worth every penny, especially for long flights to distant lands”. Well, thank you Bob! Author Christopher Clark, a professor of modern European history and fellow at the University of Cambridge, uses new sources and his extraordinary analytical eye to reconsider the history that we have supported over the past century, beginning with the claim that the flash point of the Great War, which resulted in the lost of 15 million lives was not the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, as has long been held, but rather the invasion of Libya by Italy in 1911. That led to two Balkan wars in 1911 and 1912. In the 1912 war, the Bulgarians, supported by Russia, came within miles of seizing Constantinople. Clark uses the term sleepwalkers to describe the leaders of Europe, each of whom was distracted by crises from family illness to financial crisis, to small wars; they missed the signals of disaster as they “*somnambulated*”, which in some schools of historical thought lets them off far too easily. But with great detail and novelistic pacing, Clark marshals pertinent facts and timelines and calls to our attention

other deeper seeded underlying factors, including the predatory and circular economic system between the creditor nations of France, Germany and Britain with the debtor nations of the Ottoman Empire, Russia and the Hapsburg Dynasty: loans used to create a dependency, loans created to filter into the hands of editors who would use publications and newspapers to elucidate the ideas of one side or another (major media propaganda operations were used), and loans created to open up larger export markets for the creditor nations. It is a highly readable and monumental historical work (and at almost 750 pages it is the size of a serious door stop) of the first order.

Smart Cities: Big Data, Civic Hackers, and the Quest for a New Utopia

By Anthony M. Townsend



In 1913, 10% of the world's population lived in cities.

In 2013, 50% of the world's population lived in cities.

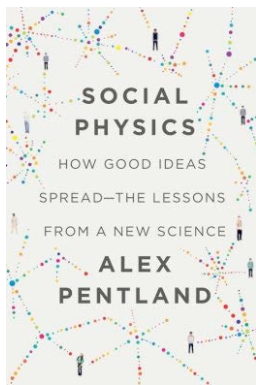
In 2050, projections are that 75% of the world's population will live in cities.

As we move from an industrial era to a digital era, how will that transition affect how will we live in these urban islands? There are many possible answers and in Anthony Townsend's excellent new book, *Smart Cities: Big Data, Civic Hackers, and the Quest for a New Utopia*, we get a look at the range of options that await us. If we dispense with the much-hyped, commercially driven "smart city" petri dish experiments (Masdar City in the UAE and SongDo in Korea)—they are, after all, not real cities but an attempt to build technology systems and then overlay people on top—then we can move into the realm that Townsend is most interested in. Cities after all, are about people. "Smart cities", he says, "are places where information technology is wielded to address problems old and new". These smart cities are really about people and their connectedness with each other and their infrastructure. The technology is the connective tissue. Townsend describes an emerging world as much about the waterworks and transport system as it is about citizen empowerment and the "Gov2.0" linkage that makes both better. In this passionate look at our near future, Townsend doesn't shy away from the problems we will have in the "buggy, brittle, and bugged"

digital infrastructure. He cites Highlands Forum alumnus Charles Perrow, author of the classic work *Normal Accidents*, in telling us that safety systems introduced to protect us from the complexity of this sensing infrastructure will actually result in normal accidents. With more functions performed over cellular networks (the “*fainting ladies of the networked world*”), we will be dependent on less-than-reliable connectivity. And bugged? Yes, mass surveillance is a concern. But even with the potential of a buggy, brittle, and bugged ecosystem, there is a trump card: individual citizens wired together. “*You are no longer just a cog in a vast machine. You are part of the mind of the smart city itself. And that gives you the power to shape the future*”.

Social Physics: How Good Ideas Spread—the Lessons from a New Science

Alex Pentland

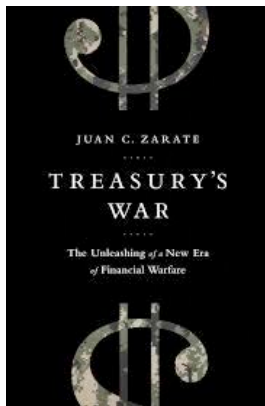


Sandy Pentland is perhaps the best known, and likely the most thoughtful researcher, chronicler, and implementer of the “Big Data” movement. As one of the “world’s top 7 data scientists” (Forbes), Pentland directs the MIT Media Lab Human Dynamics Laboratory and co-leads the World Economic Forum Big Data and Personal Data initiatives. His first book, *Honest Signals* (a featured book on our 2008 annual reading list), demonstrated that our problems are getting more complicated and complex, and applying the work and intelligence of groups to them is likely to be critical; Pentland told us that sensing technology will change business and the sciences, and what that would mean for our growing social networking and collaborating within groups. With this follow-up, *Social Physics: How Good Ideas Spread—the Lessons from a New Science*, Pentland pursues the “*reliable, social connections between information and idea flow on the one hand and people’s behavior on the other...it allows us to predict the productivity of small groups, of departments within companies, and even of entire cities*” (linking Pentland’s research to the ideas of Anthony Townsend in *Smart Cities*). What drives this is big data. Pentland, like Townsend, acknowledges that not all is utopian in an information exchange of digitally connected netizens: “*One disturbing implication of these findings is that our hyperconnected world may be moving toward a state in which there is too much idea flow*”. Another problem might just be the flip side of the coin of behavior prediction emanating from the processing of big data—depending on how that data is used and by whom, the positive can become a negative. But the heart of this

groundbreaking treatment of data and our future addresses the way in which we will succeed against abuse of the data and of our lives—a “*New Deal on Data—workable guarantees that the data needed for public goods are readily available while at the same time protecting the citizenry*” (you have the right to possess data about you; you have the right to full control over the use of your data; you have the right to dispose of or distribute your data). Pentland is that rare combination of extraordinary scientist and articulate author whose work exposes and suggests pathways forward on critical social issues of our time. This is a valuable work, staking out ground for the resolution of challenges and giving each of us a sense of the choices that will determine who we will be. (Forthcoming, January 2014)

Treasury’s War: The Unleashing of a New Era of Financial Warfare

By Juan C. Zarate

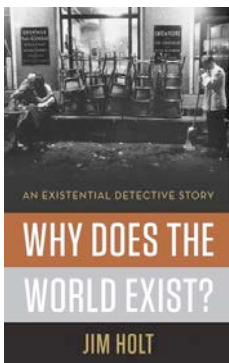


Juan Zarate was at the center of one of the least known and understood aspects of national security of the last two decades. As Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, with a portfolio that included terrorist financing and financial crime, and then as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Combating Terrorism during the Bush administration, Zarate and his colleagues created a new way of exercising power in largely unseen and highly effective ways that spread from Al Qaeda to North Korea to Iran, whose outcomes have clearly borne fruit. Financial strictures leveraging US and other financial markets while excluding bad actors from the financial system, which the Iranians called “the hidden war”, which the North Koreans acknowledged hurt them more than anything else done to them, and which Osama bin Laden lamented dried up his funds and freedom of action, have been highly successful. In his new book *Treasury’s War: the Unleashing of a New Era of Financial Warfare*, Zarate describes how the Department of Treasury became a more influential contributor in the array of national security organizations of the United States, and the tools and processes they created and implemented in going after rogue actors. Zarate’s story is a fascinating story in an operational sense; it is equally interesting in from the perspective of organizational and political finesse. The Department of Treasury had lost much of its enforcement tools in the transfer of agencies and authorities to the newly

created Department of Homeland Security. Treasury had to reinvent itself in the national security space. Zarate, a senior advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, has delivered a fascinating and timely inside story about another way of exercising power, one that has clearly had impact that we can now understand in the context of the ongoing negotiations with Iran. Zarate understands clearly that while these *counterparties*, those tied to us in the global financial system, have been deterred and forced to act in self-defeating ways, they will likely adapt in the future. And so will we.

Why Does the World Exist: An Existential Detective Story

By Jim Holt



From a limited sample size gained over the course of decades of listening to a countless number of interesting people from all walks of life, many of us, it would seem, have a friend, college classmate, or family member who like to throw “intellectual hand grenades” or challenge us with questions on the meaning of life and our place in it. These are the people who frustrate and delight us, forcing us think beyond the moment and dig deep. Jim Holt’s *Why Does the World Exist: An Existential Detective Story* is a long visit with that friend, classmate, or family member, and at the end of the day, we are the better for it. Holt starts big: *“Suppose there were nothing. Then there would be no laws; for laws, after all, are something. If there were no laws, then everything would be permitted. If everything were permitted, then nothing would be forbidden. So if there were nothing, nothing would be forbidden. Thus, nothing self-forbidding. Therefore, there must be something. QED.”* Pause, rest a bit. Holt then takes his readers on a world tour of great thinkers, posing to them his questions, like the aforementioned friend, classmate, or family member, and they do provide him with thoughtful answers. Holt is an excellent writer, who frames his philosophical exchanges in clear and often witty fashion. What we learn is that the journey begun when considering our answer tells us more about ourselves than the answer itself—if indeed we arrive at one.