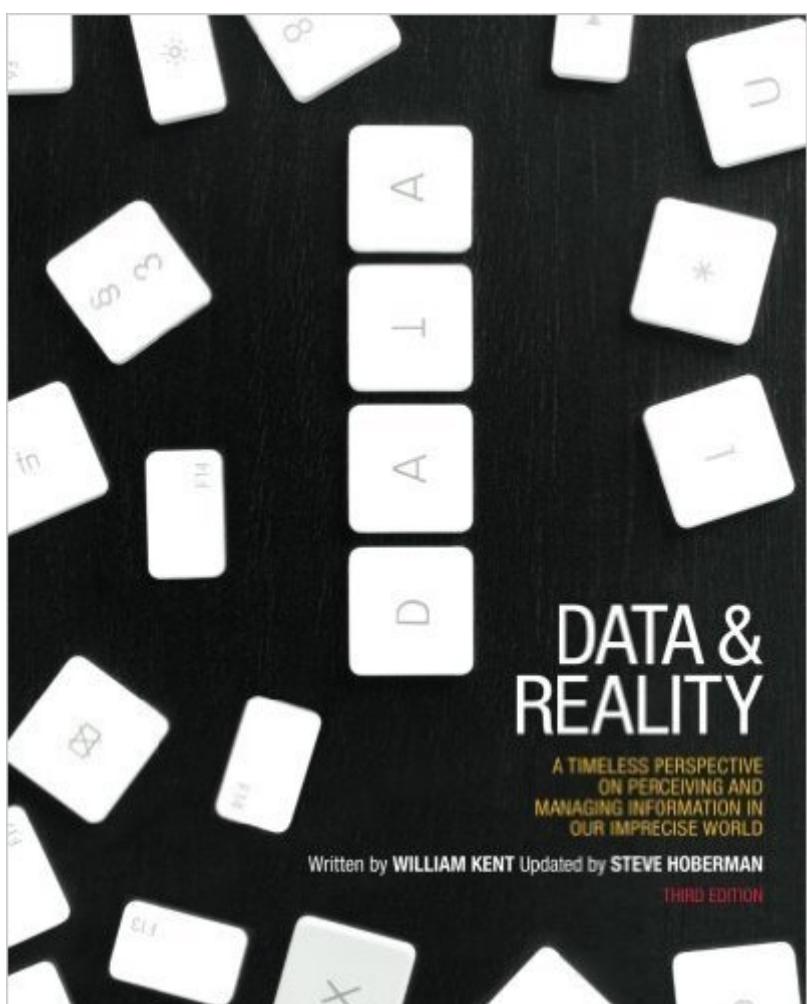


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# Data And Reality: A Timeless Perspective On Perceiving And Managing Information In Our Imprecise World, 3rd Edition



## Synopsis

Let's step back to the year 1978. Sony introduces hip portable music with the Walkman, Illinois Bell Company releases the first mobile phone, Space Invaders kicks off the video game craze, and William Kent writes *Data and Reality*. We have made amazing progress in the last four decades in terms of portable music, mobile communication, and entertainment, making devices such as the original Sony Walkman and suitcase-sized mobile phones museum pieces today. Yet remarkably, the book *Data and Reality* is just as relevant to the field of data management today as it was in 1978. *Data and Reality* gracefully weaves the disciplines of psychology and philosophy with data management to create timeless takeaways on how we perceive and manage information. Although databases and related technology have come a long way since 1978, the process of eliciting business requirements and how we think about information remains constant. This book will provide valuable insights whether you are a 1970s data-processing expert or a modern-day business analyst, data modeler, database administrator, or data architect. This third edition of *Data and Reality* differs substantially from the first and second editions. Data modeling thought leader Steve Hoberman has updated many of the original examples and references and added his commentary throughout the book, including key points at the end of each chapter. The important takeaways in this book are rich with insight yet presented in a conversational writing style. Here are just a few of the issues this book tackles: Has "business intelligence" replaced "artificial intelligence"? Why is a map's geographic landscape analogous to a data model's information landscape? Where do forward and reverse engineering fit in our thought process? Why are we all becoming "data archeologists"? What causes the communication chasm between the business professional and the information technology professional, and how can the logical data model bridge this gap? Why do we invest in hardware and software to solve business problems before determining what the business problems are in the first place? What is the difference between oneness, sameness, and categories? Why does context play a role in every design decision? Why do the more important attributes become entities or relationships? Why do symbols speak louder than words? What's the difference between a data modeler, a philosopher, and an artist? Why is the 1975 dream of mapping all attributes still a dream today? What influence does language have on our perception of reality? Can we distinguish between naming and describing? From Graeme Simsion's foreword: While such fundamental issues remain unrecognized and unanswered, *Data and Reality*, with its lucid and compelling elucidation of the questions, needs to remain in print. I read the book as a database administrator in 1980, as a researcher in 2002, and just recently as the manuscript for the present edition. On each occasion I found something more, and on each occasion I considered it the most

important book I had read on data modeling. It has been on my recommended reading list forever. The first chapter in particular should be mandatory reading for anyone involved in data modeling. In publishing this new edition, Steve Hoberman has not only ensured that one of the key books in the data modeling canon remains in print, but has added his own comments and up-to-date examples, which are likely to be helpful to those who have come to data modeling more recently. Don't do any more data modeling work until you've read it.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I did my PhD in database in the early 80s. This book by W. Kent was around already and I heard about it but did not have a copy of it. Had I read the book, my research work would have been 10 times better. This current printing is the reprint of the original one. The author mentioned in the preface that he was asked to update the book but he didn't because he thought it was still up to date (and I absolutely agree). If you are in data modeling and database area, believe me, this is a must read. It is about the philosophy of data modeling and how data and reality are related. In my opinion, its content cannot be obsolete. It is technology independent. The concept of naming and identification alone is priceless for data modelers. I can't believe I have been working in the database area for more than 30 years without it.

This short book is a combination of practical data modeling thinking and the broader topic of information within database systems. The second aspect of above statement concerns how we know

and communicate information within organizations. However, and most importantly, the broader topic is worth the investment of the reader's time, even though it bridges over into Philosophy. The bridge to philosophy is tempered by the authors many years doing practical the practical work of data modeling, shaping the professional organizations which develop IT standards and interacting with thought leaders in information systems and the philosophy of knowledge. Steve Hoberman's additions to the original work by Kent clarify and make accessible this important material. In addition, his contribution gives Kent's classic work a current day perspective. For IT people who want to take data modeling to the next level or even for the executive who makes organizational decisions concerning information this is an important book.

I read the first edition of this book and it has remained a valued reference for me. It is also a "reality check" whenever I think I have designed the best data model the world has ever seen. Reviewing the suggestions and perspectives that the book provides brings me back to reality. I have to admit that I had to read the earlier version book three times and the reality came about when I reviewed my models and other models against the backdrop of the perspectives described in the book and attempted to apply some of the ideas William has put forth. What is also helpful is that William did not attempt to put forth singular solutions, but describes the problem in detail so you can appreciate all the perspectives before deciding how to deal with the problems and challenges in an informed way. When dealing with data, ignorance is not bliss. Reality should rule. For example if you have to model roles and relationships you will attest to the fact that there is no best solution. Other books provide prescriptive solutions that eventually limit the use of data. They are too simplistic. William looks at this problem from a distance and then delves into the microscopic view. It provides a Grand Unified Theory for data. This version of the book offered me an opportunity to renew my understanding and appreciation for data and with the additional content provided by Steve Hoberman, some helpful examples and clarifications of the concepts. More reality. Anyone in the field of data including data architects, designers and developers should read this book and internalize the concepts and issues identified in it. Only then will you have a "real" perspective on data.

This book does bring a sense of "reality" to data and data modeling. The author provides a fresh perspective on data and data modeling without being dogmatic about which way is the best way to represent data. He exposes some of the subtle but critical factors which everyone working with data needs. His exposure and description of relationships and how to address them was enlightening.

Some very important considerations for data modeling. Clearly explained with lots of good examples. William Kent does an excellent job of delving into the philosophy but always pointing back to the need to keep things practical for your use case. This will change the way you think about data and how it is represented.

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