

## Your Summer Reading List - "Permanent Collection" Edition

To celebrate the beginning of summer, we've put together a special annual reading list for you. Normally each June we review books that have been published in the current year that can help you communicate more effectively. For this year's edition, however, we thought we'd try something a little different – so we've compiled a list of eight foundational texts that absolutely must be in your library if you're in the changing-the-word business. As you'll see, our list includes books originally published as far back as fifty years ago, but we believe they have stood the test of time, and more importantly, provide guidance that can help you right now. If they're not already there, we hope they'll find a place in your permanent collection, too.

### Diffusion of Innovations

by Everett Rogers (Free Press, 5th ed. © 2003)

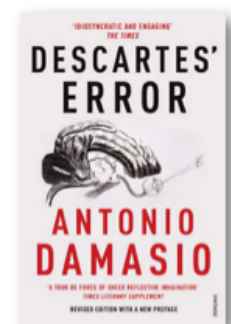
Even 56 years after its debut, *Diffusion* remains the definitive manual for introducing new ideas and convincing millions of people to try them - even if this wasn't the author's intention. *Diffusion* is an exhaustive analysis of over 500 innovations from the cure for scurvy (which took nearly two centuries to gain acceptance) to mobile phones (which went from novelty to ubiquity in about two seconds). Rogers, who coined the term "early adopter", studied these innovations to learn what makes a new idea attractive, how it spreads from one person to another, and what factors accelerate that diffusion. One caveat: *Diffusion* is not a breezy read. There are long sections worth skipping (chapters 2 and 3 on the history of diffusion research are positively sleep-inducing), but Rogers' analysis of why some new ideas catch on while others don't may provide the key to making your next new idea stick.



### Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain

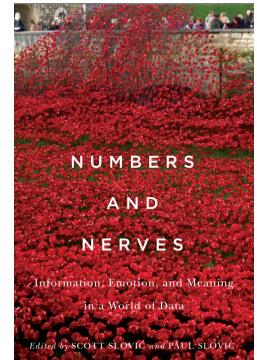
by Antonio Damasio (Penguin Books, © 2005)

"I think, therefore I am," wrote Rene Descartes, and for centuries this statement has stood as a cornerstone of Western philosophy. Antonio Damasio, neuroscientist and author, begs to differ. A more accurate description of the human experience, Damasio asserts, would be "I think *and feel*, therefore I am," because thought and emotion are intertwined and inseparable. This has important implications for decision-making, which Damasio maintains is not an entirely rational process. Emotions are always in the mix and often are the determining factor. And that has important implications for good causes that want to influence how others decide. If your outreach doesn't speak to your audience's emotional as well as their rational side, you're not working both sides of the brain. And if your colleagues have derided emotional messages as unduly "melodramatic" or "manipulative," *Descartes' Error*, first published in 1994, provides solid evidence to counter those arguments.



## **Numbers and Nerves - Information, Emotion and Meaning in a World of Data** edited by Scott Slovic and Paul Slovic (Oregon State University Press, © 2015)

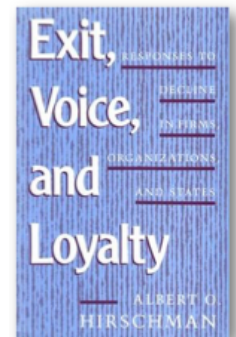
"We require data in order to describe such phenomena as contamination, genocide, species extinction, and climate change," the Slovic's write in the opening of this important book. "But the data alone, while bolstering the authority of journalists and scientists, tend to wash past audiences with minimal impact." This conundrum provides the inspiration for a series of essays by Nicholas Kristof, Annie Dillard, Terry Tempest Williams, Bill McKibben, Homero and Betty Aridjis, and many others. The overarching conclusion, which may give solace to both devotees of data and hardcore storytellers, is also provided by the father and son team who edited the book: "In the past two decades, cognitive science has increasingly come to support the claim that we, as a species, think best when we allow numbers and narratives... to work together."



## **Exit, Voice & Loyalty**

by Albert O. Hirschman (Harvard University Press, © 1970)

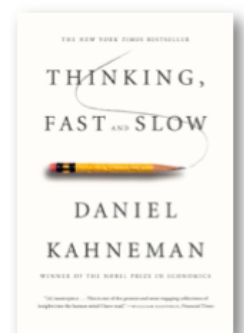
*Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States* is one of those rare books that gives you an entirely new way of looking at familiar problems. Written by Albert O. Hirschman in 1970, it takes an economic theory about human behavior in the marketplace - i.e., why we'll easily abandon some products or services (exit), defend others (voice), and the factor that explains our choices (loyalty) - and shows how it can be applied to social issues. If you work in education, for example, and have followed the rise of charter schools (as well as the decline of public schools), Hirschman's book will give you an entirely new lens through which to see this issue.



## **Thinking, Fast and Slow**

by Daniel Kahneman (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, © 2011)

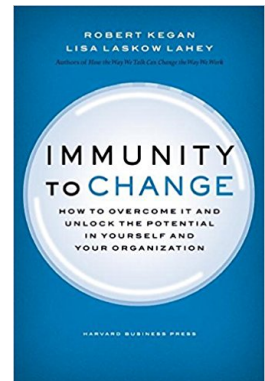
If Jonah Lehrer's *How We Decide* or Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink* is already on your bookshelf, Kahneman's *Thinking, Fast and Slow* deserves a place as well. Like Lehrer and Gladwell, Kahneman - a winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics - investigates how our minds work, and he arrives at a similar conclusion. When it comes to making decisions, Kahneman writes, we work quickly and intuitively - what he terms "System 1" thinking. As a result, our decisions are often impulsive and driven by emotions. Only later, when we have more time to reflect, do the more contemplative and objective faculties ("System 2") get involved. In those moments, our brains create the rationale we use to convince ourselves that our decision was completely thought through. For anyone in the business of moving public opinion and changing behavior, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* is full of useful insights that can inform and improve the way you communicate.



## Immunity to Change

by Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey (Harvard Business School Press © 2009)

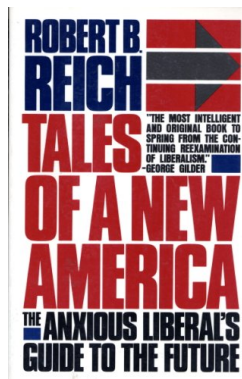
Changing behavior is hard work, and finding precisely the right keys to unlock change has challenged dissatisfied spouses, disappointed parents, and disgruntled managers for ages. Some will say people can't change, but Kegan and Lahey beg to differ, and they make a strong case in *Immunity to Change*. People can change, Kegan and Lahey contend, but first you (the aspiring agent of change) have to understand that they are heavily invested in the way things are. So invested, in fact, that their attachment to the status quo functions like an immune system warding off real change. Fortunately, there are ways around these defenses, and the co-authors outline specific steps for facilitating change in individuals and across entire organizations.



## Tales of a New America

by Robert Reich (Times Books © 1987)

Several sets of stories help to define your personal identity. One set contains the stories you tell over and over - about where you grew up, how you met your spouse, why you do what you do. If you live in the U.S., former Labor Secretary Reich maintains that there is another set of stories that defines life in America and directly impacts how you live. In *Tales of a New America*, Reich tells these four stories and offers specific examples of how they have affected government policy from our earliest colonial days to the Reagan administration (the "present" for when this book was published.) If your audience is comprised of Americans and you want to better understand how they think - yes, even thirty-one years after it first came out - consider Reich's book must reading.



## Influence - The Psychology of Persuasion

by Robert B. Cialdini, Ph.D. (Harper Business - Revised Edition © 2006)

"Behavior change" is another common theme for public interest advocates as we're often faced with the question, "How are we going to convince them to do that?" Cialdini's book - originally published in 1984 but still considered a text book in marketing circles - looks at the myriad ways people are influenced (especially by advertisers and politicians) and groups them into six categories: reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity. Some may look at these techniques and think, "Oh, how awful! How manipulative!" I thought, "How effective!" and I hope after reading this book you'll add them to your communications tool kit.

