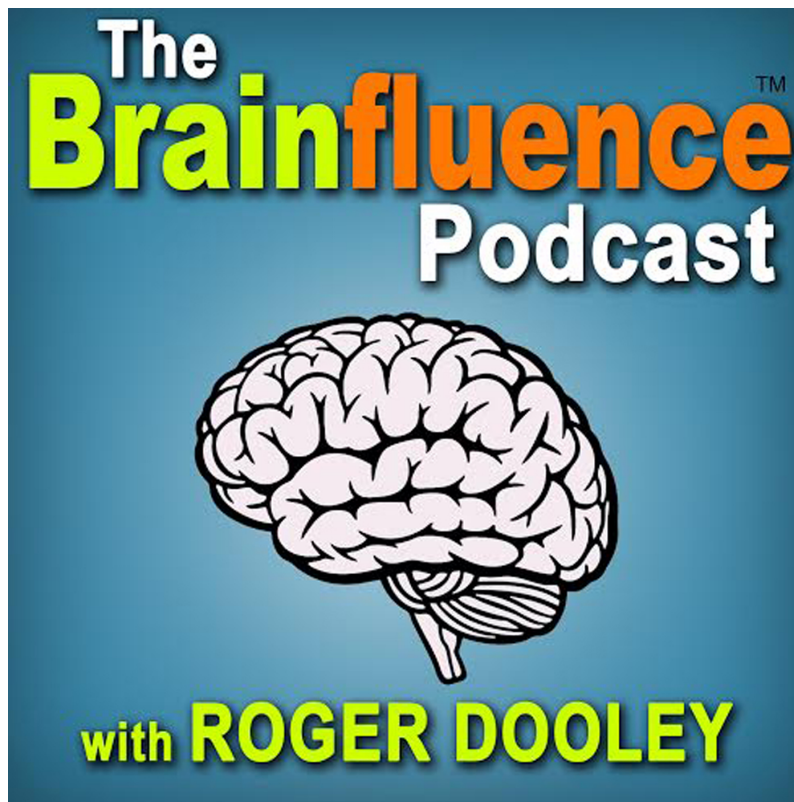


**How to Read 57,000 Books with Gary Hoover**

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/gary-hoover-books>



Full Episode Transcript

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**Roger Dooley**

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**

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Welcome to the Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley, author, speaker and educator on neuromarketing and the psychology of persuasion. Every week, we talk with thought leaders that will help you improve your influence with factual evidence and concrete research. Introducing your host, Roger Dooley.

Roger Dooley: Welcome to the Brainfluence Podcast, I'm Roger Dooley. Our guest this week has an unusual story. He's the founder of the first book superstore chain, Bookstop, that was later acquired by Barnes and Noble. He's the founder of business information company Hoovers.com which was acquired by Dun and Bradstreet. For 10 years he's been the entrepreneur in residence of the University of Texas at Austin, first a McComb's Business School and now at the graduate School of Information. He's also an expert on books as we'll learn and is the author of The Lifetime Learners Guide To Reading and Learning. As you may have guessed from, hoovers.com clue, our guest today is my friend Gary Hoover. Welcome to the show Gary.

Gary Hoover: Well great, Roger, thanks, good to be here.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, so Gary, when we met, you were living in Austin as I was, but then you moved to Flatonia, Texas, which sounds like a totally made up place, but I actually checked Google and confirmed that Flatonia exists. What took you from one of the top entrepreneurial cities in the country to Flatonia?

Gary Hoover: Oh boy, well I am a railroad buff and a railroad fan, and Flatonia's actually one of top 75 train viewing spots in the country. So, I'd know the town for a long time, and Austin

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got really expensive, and where I live became more valuable, and I was able to find a really affordable building here in downtown Flatonia. We were just named a National Historic District last year.

Roger Dooley: Oh, that's awesome. Are you in that district? What are the boundaries of it? Is it big or small?

Gary Hoover: My building abuts it. My building actually part of it was the first hotel in town from the 1870s when the town was founded when the railroad first came through, the Southern Pacific Railroad, but it had been remodeled and reconditioned in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. I guess no longer qualifies as historic, but it ... The building next door is the old opera house and hospital, no lots of history. And I bought an old vacant community health clinic with 34 small rooms, exam rooms and everything, and so to hold my 57,000 books in 170 bookcases, it was perfect. So now, each of I think 32 room, each one is a different subject. So, it's really set up to be an ideal used bookstore, which is what I expect it will become after I die.

Roger Dooley: Sort of easy to transform at that point, but hopefully that won't be any time in the near future.

Gary Hoover: No, I'm ... Yep.

Roger Dooley: So, actually I'm kind of jealous, Gary, because I read a lot of books, not as many as you perhaps, but I acquire them myself, and they're sent to me for review purposes, and so, I have a lot of books coming in, and every six months or so I have to thin the herd to keep my library in check. And I find those books that I think, well probably not going to read this again or I'm probably won't need it for

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reference, and then I'll donate them to a library or someplace else. And I'm guessing you find it pretty hard to get rid of books.

Gary Hoover: Yeah, yeah. No, I have a-

Roger Dooley: What was my first clue, right?

Gary Hoover: Had that discipline. I've never sold a book. Well, I used to be in the bookstore business, so we sold a lot of books, but I was probably our best customer. And I sometimes carry extra copies so I can give a few away of some of my favorite books, and my library is really a reference library. There's almost no fiction here. Pretty much every book I acquire I expect to use as a reference source for the rest of my life, and that's generally proven to be true. Last night, digging into a 1984 book, the night before that an 1894 book, and just go back to them over and over again.

Roger Dooley: That's great. You've had a pretty amazing entrepreneurial journey. How did you get into the book superstore business?

Gary Hoover: Oh boy, as quickly as I can tell that, I fell in love with business when I was a little kid. I grew up in a General Motors factory town, 27,000 people worked at GM in a town of 60,000 people in Anderson, Indiana. Nobody could answer my questions about business in school. I discovered Fortune magazine, which covered General Motors and the other giant companies. Started subscribing to Fortune at 12, by the time I was 13 or 14, I had decided retailing was my field, and I went around and talked to the managers of the stores at JC Penney and Sears and everybody. And so I was already well on the

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trail to becoming a retailer by the time I was in the 8th grade. Over the years, I spent nine years working for three large companies to really learn the retail trade. First as a Wall Street analyst and then working for two big department store companies, and trying to figure out where I thought the biggest opportunity was to start my own retail chain.

Through seven years of study and analysis, I came up with the idea of the book superstore, really the Toys R Us concept of blighted books, and there we were, 36 years ago last month. No, 36 years ago like two weeks ago, we opened our first store in Austin, Texas and it was a huge success, and we grew it from there, and then Barnes and Noble bought it when it was seven years old. And that' show they really got into the book superstore business.

Roger Dooley: 'Cause Barnes and Noble existed then, but they had more conventional size stores, right?

Gary Hoover: They were an interesting mix. They were really operated from Boston to Philadelphia. They had college bookstores, which they still do. They operated one giant store at 17th or 18th Street at 5th Avenue in New York, which was an amazing store. They were the first people to discount New York Times bestsellers very deeply, like 40% off, which means about you're selling them at cost. They were good promoters. I had observed that idea, but they were really a regional firm, but then had bought B. Dalton, one of the two big national firms, the other being Walden books, and spent \$300 million on that, and then they bought us for a lot less than that, realized we were the future, and ended up closing up the Dalton chain and writing off that investment and rolling ahead and

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changing, morphing our idea, they added the coffee shop, and the mahogany look and built bigger stores, but the basic idea, their national construction expansion campaign.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah, that's really great, and actually what you were talking about there almost reminds me of Jeff Bezos, 'cause he analyzed the market back in the mid-90s or so, and sort of came to the same conclusion that a book superstore would be a great idea, only one that was online.

Gary Hoover: Yeah, and it's really interesting. There was a thing called, wasn't called the Reader's Digest, the Reader's Guide ... Anyway, one of the New York publishers, one of the famous ones, came up with the idea of a big, fat catalog that listed not all the books but a huge number of books, I forget how many thousand, and then you could call an 800 number or whatever and order them. But it was a wonderful idea, but it predated the internet and predated Amazon by a little bit.

Roger Dooley: Right, so you have distributing a gigantic paper catalog isn't all that effective.

Gary Hoover: Well, they sold it as a book. It was whatever, \$15, big fat paperback in the bookstores. It was a very cool book. It was a nice reference book to have.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative), interesting. I haven't run across that one, although I do remember some early book catalogs that I can't remember the name of it now, but it was a discount catalog, and they were sort of the model actually for my early computer mail order business.

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'Cause they managed to cram quite a few products into normal sized catalog. This is probably not the one, this is not the kind of thing you're talking about, which is an actually, probably book sized catalog, but these were maybe a 32 page catalog or 64 page catalog sometimes, and they got a lot of product in there. And so when we went to printers and graphic designers, I carried one of those with me to say, okay, this is kind of the look we're striving for, at least in some parts of the catalog where we had to list a lot software titles, but we couldn't devote a quarter of a page to each one. So, interesting stuff.

Gary Hoover: No, that would have been the Outlet Book Company. They operated I think under different names, maybe Publisher's Central Bureau or something.

Roger Dooley: Yes, that's it, that's the one.

Gary Hoover: And they were later bought by Random House, and they were by far the largest force in the publishing of remainder books, or what we call make up books. Yeah, they were a great company, really run by smart people. I took a course in book publishing from their head guy at NYU when I lived in New York City in the early 70s.

Roger Dooley: Interesting. I was a great customer of theirs too. That's how I found them, because then it wasn't quite as easy to buy books other than as you ... Other than going to a B. Dalton store in the mall or Walden Bookstore in the mall, and so these guys were great, where you could get bestsellers that maybe ended up in the remainder list for whatever reason for a buck or two, as opposed to mall store prices. So ... Anyway, so after the bookstore phase, how did you get into the business information business?

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Gary Hoover: Well, that was really an outgrowth of my love of studying big businesses that had begun when I was 12, and I had come up with the idea about 20 years earlier. Yeah, we started Hoovers, or what became Hoovers, it was originally called the Reference Press with the goal of being the Webster's of business. We had started that in the 1990, and I had mocked up a page of that idea in the mid-to-early 70s, so the idea was that if you went into a bookstore, I would estimate 70% of the people coming in a bookstore to buy a book are seeking information, and the other 30% are seeking entertainment and of course the border is blurred between the two.

But while novels are still huge and make up the very best sellers, most people are coming in they want to know how to program in Java, how to quit smoking, what hotel to stay at in London, what's the best version of Mozart on CD, who won the World Series in 1948, how do they train their dog, what breed of dog should they buy, what kind of car should they buy, on and on, and how to cook things, you know, but the one thing that they came in and asked that we couldn't answer was, "Well, what's the biggest company in America?" And how is General Motors doing? Is Ford gaining on them? Who are these guys, Toyota, and on and on, and of course, those are my kind of questions, and they were about the only ones, factual type questions, that we couldn't answer with a book in a bookstore.

So the idea was really to create like a world almanac, an annual guide to the big companies of the world. So we started publishing books, we called it Hoovers Handbook, and I'd never named anything after myself, but that was easier to protect, copyright and everything. By using my

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own name it's hard for somebody to take your own name away from you, and it was alliterative. It was a big, fat \$20 paperback book with one page each on the 542 most important companies in the world, and so we started that, and the book did okay. We had good distribution. I used money from the sale of Bookstop, a bunch of it, and other friends came and got involved.

But one of my friends kept nagging me, a guy named Patrick Spain, an old college buddy. We had started our first business together back on the college campus in 1970, and he kept saying, "It's going to be online," and I said, "Well, I know, I've got CompuServe, and all that." This is before AOL, this is the old green screen and all that, and he said, "No, no, it's gonna get bigger." And he sold the rights to republish the pages of our book to Lexis Nexis, the big legal information service, and they were selling it to lawyers who might not have been very cost conscious. I'm trying to remember, but I want to say lawyers were paying maybe \$10 a page to look at it. And of course, you could buy all 500 pages for \$19.95.

Roger Dooley: But if you're passing it along to a client, then it doesn't really matter, does it?

Gary Hoover: Well, I guess not, and anyway, I realized well that's good, and got to the point where I said, look, I had this vision of a book publishing company. You have this vision online thing. It looks like there might be more gold there, and I turned over the keys to him. He became CEO. I remained as chairman a year or two, and I remained on the board until the company was bought in 2003 by Dun and Bradstreet, but Patrick made it a huge success, came up with it. But first we sold all of our information to AOL and

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then evolved Hoovers.com pretty early. I want to say maybe '93, '94 Hoovers.com came along, and-

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative), that's pretty early for a website.

Gary Hoover: Yeah, yeah, and we changed the name to Hoovers and went public on Nasdaq in 1999. Went through the whole rollercoaster of the dot-com crash, and all that, the stock price did, and then Dun and Bradstreet bought it in '03, and it continues to thrive and prosper from all I can tell.

Roger Dooley: Well, that's great. Let me, we could spend this whole time talking about your entrepreneurial history, but let's jump over to what you've been doing at UT Austin. Curious, what have you learned from working as an instructor and mentor for the last 10 or so years?

Gary Hoover: Oh boy, that really would take hours. You know, I learned from entrepreneurs every day. I learn from students. I learn how well prepared or not prepared they are. I get a good feeling for what the quality of the education they've gotten is. I spent one year full-time with an office at the McComb's Business School at the University of Texas at Austin, and that was a wonderful experience. I met with I think about 200 individual students or student groups about their business ideas, and my own background, because I love the study of business, covers pretty much every industry. There isn't any industry I haven't looked into at least a little bit. And quite a few that I've really gone deep in a broad range of industries. So, that put me in kind of a unique position to help, because you have a real tendency on college campuses and in all the high tech centers like Austin, Silicon Valley, to focus on just tech businesses, and yet probably 95% of the future

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entrepreneurs at the University of Texas aren't going to be in tech industries.

Those are important, they're great, they're exciting, but they're going to start restaurants and hotels and dog washing places, as one person in Austin did. They're going to start a million different things in a million different fields, and often the greatest opportunities are in the niches or categories that nobody looks at, like wholesaling air conditioning parts. I met a guy the other day, he built a whole business just selling parts for lawn mowers and became the biggest force in America. Build A Sign, an Austin-based company, makes banners and signs online. It just sold this week for \$280 million. So, but I'm also learning, and I learned what the academic environment was like, and I've been to, gosh, I've been to 45 countries. I've taught in Guatemala, Columbia, Portugal. I've spoken all over Asia, Latin America, Europe, and all over the United States, and I've been on a lot of campuses in the US as a speaker and guest lecturer.

So, Peter Drucker said one of the best ways to learn a subject is to teach it, and it causes you to ask yourself questions. The really great students ask you questions you weren't prepared for. After enough years, fewer and fewer of those pop up, most of the questions I've heard now. But also on my side of the table, I really came to realize that I was really doing my job when a person would say to me, "No one's ever said that to me before." When I really took them out of the ... 'Cause it's so easy to get into groupthink and the common wisdom and everybody agrees to this. I had one fellow, he had a concept and it only worked if oil prices went up and up.

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And I said, "What if they go down?" And he says, "Well, everybody knows they're not going down." And of course, they did go down, but it's not always that hard, especially coming in with a fresh set of outside eyes like mine that have seen a lot of years and a lot of industries.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, let's move on to your expertise as a reader. I guess you'd say, Gary, that reading is a pretty great way to educate yourself in and a fairly inexpensive one too compared to the alternatives. I was scanning the reviews on Amazon for your Lifetime Learner's Guide, and all but two were five stars, and one of them was a one-star review, which I have to quote here because it was so hilarious. It was really short and read, "It pretty much blows. I still barely read." So apparently, this reviewer was expecting some kind of religious experience that you failed to provide, but for most of us, there's really a ton of practical advice in the book, and I know I've heard ... I forget what, probably not more than one has said this, but when you can buy a book of \$10 or \$20 bucks, you're taking the mind of an expert, who's perhaps spent decades in this particular field, and spent another year or two distilling that into a book and giving you that for a small amount of money. I mean, that's about as concentrated a lesson that you're going to get.

Gary Hoover: Oh yeah, when we used to open the bookstores, I would say to our crew, I'd say, "Look around us," I said, "you've got millions and millions of person hours that went into these." I mean, I've got books where the author spent 10, 15 years on 'em. There's a fellow writing a two volume history of the Pennsylvania Railroad, one of the greatest companies in America's history, and the first volume came out for years up through 1920 or 1917. I forget. It's

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cut off, and I emailed and said, "Well, when's the second volume coming out?" He says, "Oh give me about another 10 years just like the first one."

So yeah, the energy that goes into it, and then the fact that they're so portable, and I realize not quite as portable as a Kindle or a tablet reader or whatever, but they're portable. They're incredibly durable. They're printed on acid free paper these days, so they're gonna last hundreds of years if not longer if taken care of even modestly well. They're really amazing, and you learn differently from a book than you do reading online or on a screen. You think differently. I use what I call a random access method to study these books and get the information out of them. And so, I can't read them on a Kindle or a device, because that's really made for sequential reading, where you start at the front of the book and you go to the end. And I never do that. That's just, I don't have that kind of time. I'm really ... And this wouldn't work for a novel. I'm into information books.

Roger Dooley: No, you can't ... Novels generally aren't random access, although I guess I've read a few that almost seem that way, but that was sort of the design of the book. So okay, so given that you've got a paper book, Gary, how do you go about, 'cause I know you've read probably just about all of your 57,000 books, but obviously you didn't sit down and read them in a linear fashion in a comfy chair and just sort of browsing. What is your technique for sucking the essence out of a book as efficiently as possible?

Gary Hoover: Yeah, and that's what it really is. It's about efficiently learning about remembering what you learn and about tying it all together, and of course that book, *The Lifetime*

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Learner's Guide, as the whole system that I use, and it's also I think right now it's a free downloadable PDF on my website, Hooversworld, that section of that book, that deals with how I digest a book in 15 to 30 minutes. I believe it's called the PDF, but some of the keys are first of all, slow down, I don't speed read, I don't skim. Understand the book. Read the blurb about the author. Think about where they're coming from.

In my case, this probably wouldn't be true of most people, I even look at the publisher because having been in the book business that gives me some clues. If it's a railroad book from Indiana University Press, I know it's going to be a good one, because they're famous in that category or in architecture or a field guide from Princeton University Press. But I really focus on the table of contents, and stop and think about it. And what is the outline here? If it's a well constructed table of contents, what are the main ideas? And are there ideas, I say, well I already know all about that. Or one where I'm wow, why is that in this book? And I might go read the first two paragraphs of that chapter, and so I kinda, I give myself the freedom. It's my book and I can consume it in any method that I want, you know, I'm not under the gun to read it all, to read it cover to cover.

I go through the entire book and look at all the charts, diagrams, and photographs. That's pretty quick. A lot of the books I read, I love architecture books. Well, they're all photographs or drawings, and so but even a good biography will have pictures of the key events in the person's life. Good business history book will have charts and tables about the growth of the business or whatever. A lot of my favorite books have maps in them. So, I get

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that, and then I really focus on the index, because I scan through it, and I look for everything that I already know something about. And then I tend to dive in and read those sections, and that allows me to connect it to things that I already know. And the more you read, the bigger that pile grows.

When I get a new book now on almost any subject, I'll find 10, 15, 20 things in the index that I say, oh, I know, I've read all about that, and then I read their take on it, and I see how it adds together, how it adds to my knowledge, tells me something I didn't know or contradicts what I already thought I knew. And so I get a book on the history of the hotel industry, I'll look and see if the index and there's Milton Friedman's name, one of my old economics teachers, and I go right to that, 'cause I've had dinner with Milton and his wife in their 90s and had him in class and know a lot about him. And why is he in here? Why's he even in a book about hotel history? Some theory of his had some implication or some hotelier picked up on it.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, that sort of gives you a mental hook too, Gary, doesn't it to remember that information? But you're relating something new perhaps to something that you already know.

Gary Hoover: Absolutely. Knowledge is just a great big tree in your head, and you're hanging on Christmas ornaments or adding branches or however you want to describe it, you know. Absolutely, 'cause you're not going to remember it if you don't connect it in some way. And that's one of the reasons I read the way I do is 'cause I've always been an incredibly slow reader, because I stop on every sentence, and I think about it. So I can easily spend 30 minutes on a

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page in a really interesting, thought provocative book, and I stop and then I go, now what's that mean? And even if it's studying something like biology or anthropology or something, I'm like, well, you know what I think about General Motors or what I thought about Bookstop, or what I think about Yahoo or whatever, Facebook, how does that relate to this? 'Cause I'm always stopping and thinking.

I'm always taking notes of one type or another. I take a lot of physical notes where I write stuff with old fashion table and pen, but I take a huge number of notes in my head and scratch things. I carry a little pocket tablet around with me. I've been doing that like nine years, and I'm up to like 261. I've got over 300 business ideas in there too, 'cause business ideas flow from all this reading. The idea is to stay provoked, to stay curious, to always be eager to learn that next piece, and with all the reading I do, I find an amazing number of surprising connections. Stuff that seems like nobody else has discovered. I go on the internet, and I say, oh nobody realizes that Henry Ford got the idea for the gasoline from studying boat motors at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Or whatever the tidbit might be, and it's all those little tidbits, and they're like bricks, and it's the mortar, the connection between items. I talked about that in a couple of my books. That's in many ways the most important thing to learn, not just the items themselves, but what are the connections or the tendons and everything?

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Do you write in the books, underline and make marginal notes?

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Gary Hoover: I rarely do. I've tried that a few times. One of my things is just a fetish, I guess, but I'm preserving my books for posterity, whether they end up in a used bookstore in the hands of a collector. So I tend to try to keep them like they were the day I bought 'em. Once in a while, I'll tell you, I'll write on like the back page of the book, a blank page way at the back a list of all the things I thought the left out of the book. But no, most of the notes are elsewhere, either type up on my computer or on my tablet, written in long emails I tend to do a tremendous number of emails to my friends about, "Look what I discovered, look what I found out." But I generally don't, but hey, whatever method works for each person, how you remember ...

Just like going to meetings. I watch all these meetings and often I'm the only person in the room taking written notes, and man I just scribble like mad in about 70% of the meetings I go to. Because the act of having the thought run down your arm and through your hand, through a pen, and seeing it on paper, that just carves it into your memory, almost like your muscle memory so, because the retain. I love to consume information but I want to retain everything that I can, and I think we all have huge memories. I've got friends that say, "Oh Gary, you've got a photographic memory," because I'm always quoting all these facts and tidbits and stuff, trivia, and I say, "Yeah, but you know every musician since 1980. You know every actor and actress." Or, "You know every score of the Boston Red Sox's, the Chicago cubs." And people have huge memory capacity, which we don't even scratch. So, it's a matter of how you keep it in there. So

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much of that is about connecting to stuff you already know.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. Well, I think there's some research too that shows that handwriting notes, even in like in a college lecture say, handwriting notes increases the amount of stuff that you retain in memory versus, say, taking them on a laptop and just typing. So, I'm sure too not taking notes at all. So, do you find, Gary, that a lot of business books are just sort of like one blog post sized idea that's been puffed up into a few hundred pages so that it can be sold in bookstores. I mean I've seen so many books in the author's notes say, "Yeah, I published this article at Harvard Business Review, and they liked it so much, they wanted me to write a book about it." And you wonder if there's a lot of value add once instead of an article that runs a few pages, now you've got 290 pages.

Gary Hoover: Absolutely. That's an understatement. First of all, I believe a good chunk of business books aren't worth the paper they're printed on. But even the good ones often should have been an article, and like you said, often were, and but to have a spine wide enough to work on a bookstore shelf and to make a thick enough thing the publisher can justify at least in their own mind charging \$20, \$25 bucks, yeah, people ... And then sometimes people that have a good idea, they make one good idea into a whole book. They reach for examples and stretch their idea, and then if they get on the speaking circuit and get popular and sell a lot of books, you know God bless them for that. They write five more books that are kind of the same idea. And they apply that theory and often the theory just gets over stretched, and there maybe a nugget of a good idea, and so that's one reason business books in particular.

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Hey, if you're going to give me 40 examples in 200 pages of your idea, if I don't get your idea with three or four examples in the first 20 pages, or from a good well organized diagram, then I'm just not wasting my time. And I really don't need another 35 examples of your basic idea once I get it. It's like anything else, you know, I studied economics at the University of Chicago and four of my teachers later won Nobel prizes, so I think I got a good grounding in it. Now, the reality of it is today, 40-some years later, I'm sure I would not do very well on the detailed tests they might give.

I wouldn't be surprised if I did poorly, but at the same time, I also very clearly remember the five or 10 or 20 key concepts, the basic idea, and that's what, to be frank, enabled me to not work very hard and skip a lot of classes, because I was starting businesses and still get pretty good grades because I was always focused. What's really the key idea here? What is the driving thought that underlines all this whole theoretical system? And often it's pretty straightforward, and often in education it's glossed over. It's like okay, here are the three principles, now let's go and go off into the weeds and the details. It's like accounting.

I teach a three-hour class in financial statements, and people are petrified that aren't familiar with them, and awe man, it scares me and a balance sheet and a flow of funds statement and all that. Well, the reality is it's all very simple. It all has metaphors, you know debt and equity, it all has metaphors in people when they buy a house, debt and equity. And you can show them, okay, you buy a house. If you borrow against it and it goes up in value, that gives you a different result. If you don't borrow, then it

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depends on the interest rate, and you know and all of accounting, real fundamental accounting, there's only one concept that's kind of a, takes a little bit of thinking to get our hands around, and that's the accrual system that leads to depreciation amortization. But once you have that idea ...

Now you take an accounting course even one for non-accounts, you're going to go off into all kinds of the details. But those details, they vary by industry. Sears when they sold all those appliances, they're accounting for installments sales was very complex. Accounting for inventory in a retail store is very complex. You don't have either of those issues if you're looking at an airline's financial statements. It's a whole separate set of weeds to get into.

Roger Dooley: Right. Yeah, they have their own problems. So when you talk about getting key ideas out of a book, what do you think about these book summaries services? I've never used them or subscribed in anyway, but have you had any experience with them? And do you think that the creators of those do a reasonable job in eliminating some of the chaff and getting to the wheat?

Gary Hoover: Yeah, I ... I can't think of the name, but there was one executive summary or something. It was a big service, and I'm pretty sure my first book, we let them put it in their system. My thing is information, it's the one thing you can give away and still have, and in book form it's cheap, but ebooks and everything else. Anyway, it's everywhere, and I, yeah, I wouldn't put any limits on how people get information. When you and I were young, may still be around, I imagine it is, there was this thing called The

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Kiplinger Letter, and that went out to all the movers and shakers in America, and it was basically an underlined outline of the news of the week, and really Time magazine and Newsweek and the old US News and World Report were really not much different.

Henry Luce that created Time magazine created it as a way for busy, generally college educated people to keep up with everything in the world and only spend like two hours, one evening a week doing it, and that was his idea and that was an enormous success. It's kind of post peak now. It's got its challenges, not nearly as thick as it used to be, but it was never real thick and was half advertising. So no, I think whatever works for people, and the thing is, if you get a summary like that and the idea is intriguing, and you say, well I need to better ... Or I don't completely understand it, or I would like to see more examples to help me understand it, well then hey, you can go and run and buy the whole book.

One of my best friends, he runs a \$15 billion company, he reads two hours every morning before he goes to work, and he's not reading business books. He's one of the best educated people I've ever met. But he often has a book on his iPad and a book on his Kindle, 'cause one works in the sunlight and one doesn't, and if he really likes it, he has a physical copy. So, I'm all for any method that works for you.

Roger Dooley: Great. Well, one last question, Gary, and your book you've got 160 books that you recommend that people may not be familiar with. Can you share just two or three of those with our listeners that you think maybe they should pay attention to?

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Gary Hoover: There are so many, so I'll just kind of pick some at random.

Roger Dooley: Hard to choose among your children, isn't it?

Gary Hoover: Oh yeah, well it was hard picking the 160. A book that I found very provocative on every page, incredibly valuable is called The Universal Principles of Design, and it's not just about designing building or website, it includes that. But really how to design anything and experience anything and has all these cool, largely psychological things, habits people have and things you've got to be aware of. And a lot of ideas that were new to me, and that's a wonderful book. It's been in multiple editions, they even make a pocket edition, so I love that one.

The new Stephen Pinker book, what is it? Enlightenment Now is a wonderful book if you really want to understand the world and where it's headed and everything. There's another book you should read with it called Factfulness, F-A-C-T-F-U-L-N-E-S-S by a guy named Rosling, R-O-S-L-I-N-G. He died before they finished it, but his son wrapped it up, and I guess if I was going to throw out a third one, I love business history. That's my main passion these days. It costs our society hundreds of billions of dollars by repeating the mistakes of the past. There's almost no business school that requires you study business history, and there ...

Well, two books you could start with. One is lighter reading and easier. It's called They Made America by Harold Evans, E-V-A-N-S. But the more serious one that for me I just a wonderful book is called The Visible Hand, The Visible Hand. Like Adam Smith's Invisible Hand, but

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this is a visible hand, by a guy named Alfred Chandler, C-H-A-N-D-L-E-R, and Chandler was the greatest business historian in the US. Passed away a few years ago, but he taught at Harvard and Johns Hopkins and some other places.

I grab the World Almanac the day it comes out every year. I go through it page by page. One of my business heroes every day before I went to sleep, he read a table out of the Statistical Abstract, which is kind of a parallel book. The World Almanac is cheaper. Just looking at the numbers and thinking, what's this mean? What's it mean that ... I was reading the other day that the amount of coal coming out of Wyoming is just extraordinary, much greater than what comes out of Pennsylvania or West Virginia or anything. So, if you look at a table of coal production in the US, and then I read that China's coal production is several times as big as the US now, and of course, theirs is growing. Our coal industry is not as healthy.

So you know, I love numbers. I love data. I love raw information that I can then think about and process and add to all the other little crazy bits of information bouncing around in my head.

Roger Dooley: Great, well let me remind our audience that we are speaking with Gary Hoover. He is entrepreneur in residence at the University of Texas at Austin in their School of Information, and he's the author of The Lifetime Learner's Guide to Reading and Learning. Gary, how can people find you and your ideas online?

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Gary Hoover: The best place to go is go to hooversworld.com, and if you want to reach out to me, if you hit the contact button that'll send an email right to me, and I always respond pretty quick. If you just Google me or on YouTube I have a channel called Hoover Bits, which has got, oh boy, about 100 videos, entrepreneurship tips, but also some of my travel stuff. So, I'm spread out. I'm on LinkedIn. I've got lots and lots of posts there. I've written a bunch of biographies of great business people, and those can be found either on Hooversworld or on LinkedIn or on the archbridgeinstitute.org website, which is the outfit that has retained me to write those biographies. But they're pretty cool if I say so myself.

Roger Dooley: Yes, they are, and yeah, I find them fascinating reading, and ... So great, we will link to all those places, and to the many books that we talked about, and to any other resources we mentioned on the show notes page at rogerdooley.com/podcast. And we'll have a text version of our conversation there too.

Gary, thanks for being on the show.

Gary Hoover: Oh, it was my pleasure, thank you, Roger.

Thank you for joining me for this episode of The Brainfluence Podcast. To continue the discussion and to find your own path to brainy success, please visit us at <http://www.RogerDooley.com>.

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