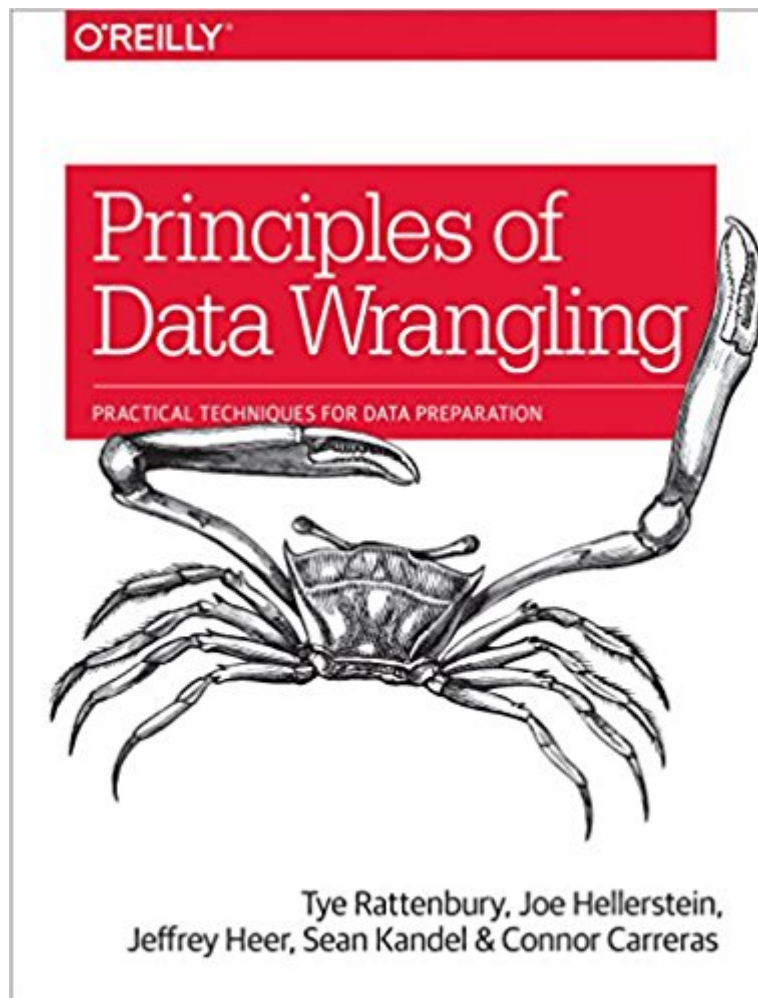




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Principles Of Data Wrangling: Practical Techniques For Data Preparation



Synopsis

A key task that any aspiring data-driven organization needs to learn is data wrangling, the process of converting raw data into something truly useful. This practical guide provides business analysts with an overview of various data wrangling techniques and tools, and puts the practice of data wrangling into context by asking, "What are you trying to do and why?" Wrangling data consumes roughly 50-80% of an analyst's time before any kind of analysis is possible. Written by key executives at Trifacta, this book walks you through the wrangling process by exploring several factors—time, granularity, scope, and structure—that you need to consider as you begin to work with data. You'll learn a shared language and a comprehensive understanding of data wrangling, with an emphasis on recent agile analytic processes used by many of today's data-driven organizations. Appreciate the importance and the satisfaction of wrangling data the right way. Understand what kind of data is available. Choose which data to use and at what level of detail. Meaningfully combine multiple sources of data. Decide how to distill the results to a size and shape that can drive downstream analysis.

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From the Forward The phrase data wrangling, born in the modern context of agile analytics, is meant to describe the lion's share of the time people spend working with data. There is a common misperception that data analysis is mostly a process of running statistical algorithms on high-performance data engines. In practice, this is just the final step of a longer and more complex process; 50 to 80 percent of an analyst's time is spent wrangling data to get it to the point at which this kind of analysis is possible. Not only does data wrangling consume most of an analyst's workday, it also represents much of the analyst's professional process: it captures activities like understanding what data is available; choosing what data to use and at what level of detail; understanding how to meaningfully combine multiple sources of data; and deciding how to distill the results to a size and shape that can drive downstream analysis. These activities represent the hard work that goes into both traditional data 'curation' and modern data analysis. And in the context of agile analytics, these activities also capture the creative and scientific intuition of the analyst, which can dictate different decisions for each use case and data source. We have been working on these issues with data-centric folks of various stripes—from the IT professionals who fuel data infrastructure in large organizations, to professional data analysts, to data-savvy 'enthusiasts' in roles from marketing to journalism to science and social causes. Much is changing across the board here. This book is our effort to wrangle the lessons we have learned in this context into a coherent overview, with a specific focus on the more recent and quickly growing agile analytic processes in data-driven organizations. Hopefully, some of these lessons will help to clarify the importance—and yes, the satisfaction—of data wrangling done well.

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