Review of *Journalism in the Age of Data* (Geoff McGhee, 2011)

Geoff McGhee's *Journalism in the Age of Data* highlights how data visualization has become a powerful tool for storytelling, bridging the gap between raw information and meaningful interpretation. While both journalism and academia rely on visualizing data, their goals, approaches, and audiences differ in ways that shape the design and impact of their graphics.

Journalistic data visualization emphasizes storytelling, accessibility, and engagement. Journalists use visuals to create narratives that are appealing and intuitive for broad audiences. Techniques like motion graphics such as, "data slideshows,", "martini glass" or "drill-down" formats invite readers to explore the information on their own. These designs balance aesthetics and clarity, drawing on skills in both graphic design and statistics. In journalism, the visual is often as important as the data itself: graphics must be clean, artful, and compelling enough to capture attention while still encouraging critical thinking. The result is often a "data story" that blends information with visuals to open up new perspectives, change how viewers think about an issue, and allow them to draw their own conclusions.

In contrast, academic data visualization is typically hierarchical, analytical, and context-heavy. Its primary function is not to entertain or engage, but to present evidence in a rigorous way that supports an argument or demonstrates a process. Academic visuals prioritize precision and explanation over design appeal, often serving as extensions of the written analysis rather than standalone narratives. For scholars, data visualization is a method of organizing and processing information through statistical charts, regression plots, or hierarchical models to reveal relationships and generate new knowledge. Instead of offering interactive storytelling, academic graphics are designed to withstand scrutiny, providing clarity and reproducibility for other researchers.

Despite these differences, both journalism and academia recognize the potential of visualization to transform numbers into meaning. Each field seeks to extract insights from data, but they view insights differently: journalism aims to engage the public through narrative and design, while academia strives to convey accuracy and depth for specialized audiences. Together, they reflect the evolving role of visualization in a data-rich era. Numbers alone are not enough, and meaning must be drawn out through visual, critical, and creative interpretation.