



Bursts: The Hidden Patterns Behind Everything We Do, from Your E-mail to Bloody Crusades

Albert-Laszlo Barabasi

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A revolutionary new theory showing how we can predict human behavior-from a radical genius and bestselling author

Can we scientifically predict our future? Scientists and pseudo scientists have been pursuing this mystery for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years. But now, astonishing new research is revealing patterns in human behavior previously thought to be purely random. Precise, orderly, predictable patterns...

Albert Laszlo Barabasi, already the world's preeminent researcher on the science of networks, describes his work on this profound mystery in *Bursts*, a stunningly original investigation into human nature. His approach relies on the digital reality of our world, from mobile phones to the Internet and email, because it has turned society into a huge research laboratory. All those electronic trails of time stamped texts, voicemails, and internet searches add up to a previously unavailable massive data set of statistics that track our movements, our decisions, our lives. Analysis of these trails is offering deep insights into the rhythm of how we do everything. His finding? We work and fight and play in short flourishes of activity followed by next to nothing. The pattern isn't random, it's "bursty." Randomness does not rule our lives in the way scientists have assumed up until now.

Illustrating this revolutionary science, Barabasi artfully weaves together the story of a 16th century burst of human activity-a bloody medieval crusade launched in his homeland, Transylvania-with the modern tale of a contemporary artist hunted by the FBI through our post 9/11 surveillance society. These narratives illustrate how predicting human behavior has long been the obsession, sometimes the duty, of those in power. Barabasi's astonishingly wide range of examples from seemingly unrelated areas include how dollar bills move around the U.S., the pattern everyone follows in writing email, the spread of epidemics, and even the flight patterns of albatross. In all these phenomena a virtually identical, mathematically described bursty pattern emerges.

Bursts reveals what this amazing new research is showing us about where individual spontaneity ends and predictability in human behavior begins. The way you think about your own potential to do something truly extraordinary will never be the same.

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