The Coming Wave: Reflections from VLTAâ??s First Book Club

Description

Article by Hayden-Anne Breedlove

In January, the Virginia Land Title Association launched its first Book Club discussion. The inaugural selection was *The Coming Wave: Technology, Power, and the Twenty-First Centuryâ??s Greatest Dilemma* by Mustafa Suleyman. The book examines the rapid emergence of powerful technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, and the challenges societies face in managing them responsibly. It proved to be a fitting and timely choice for a group of professionals whose work increasingly intersects with technology.

In *The Coming Wave*, Mustafa Suleyman, cofounder of DeepMind and a longtime leader in the AI field, argues that humanity is entering a period of unprecedented technological acceleration. The â??coming waveâ?• refers to the rapid development and widespread availability of transformative technologies such as artificial intelligence and advanced biotechnology.

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Suleyman explains that these tools will become increasingly powerful, affordable, and accessible. While they hold enormous promise, including improving medicine, productivity, and scientific discovery, they also create new risks. Technologies that once required massive government or corporate resources may soon be available to individuals or small groups. This shift raises important questions about misuse, security, and oversight.

The central dilemma Suleyman describes is what he calls the containment problem. The challenge is determining how societies can continue to benefit from innovation while preventing technologies from causing large scale harm. The book explores the tension between encouraging technological progress and establishing safeguards strong enough to protect institutions, economies, and democratic systems.

Rather than presenting simple solutions, the author encourages governments, industries, and institutions to think carefully about governance frameworks, ethical standards, and responsible use of these technologies.

The book sparked a thoughtful discussion among VLTA participants, particularly as we considered how the themes apply to the real estate and title industry.

One of the primary questions we discussed was whether safeguards should be in place regarding the use of artificial intelligence. Many participants agreed that while AI offers tremendous efficiency gains, guardrails are necessary to ensure accuracy, reliability, and accountability. In an industry where transactions depend on the integrity of public records and careful legal analysis, reliance on automated tools without proper oversight could introduce significant risk.

The group also explored what the future of AI might look like, both in the broader world and within the title industry specifically. AI tools are already beginning to influence legal and title work through document drafting, summarization, and data analysis. Perhaps AI may eventually assist with

preliminary title searches, document review, or identifying potential title issues.

There was strong consensus that professional judgment will remain essential. Title examination, underwriting decisions, and problem solving often require contextual understanding that current AI systems cannot fully replicate.

Another key topic was how to use AI safely in practice. Participants discussed the importance of treating AI as a support tool rather than a substitute for expertise. Several practical safeguards were discussed, including verifying AI generated information against original sources, protecting confidential client information when interacting with AI systems, and establishing clear policies within companies regarding appropriate use. Education was also highlighted as critical. Industry professionals must understand both the capabilities and limitations of these technologies in order to use them responsibly.

The Coming Wave challenges readers to think seriously about how society should manage the rapid development of powerful technologies. For the title industry, these questions are far from theoretical. Artificial intelligence is already beginning to influence how professionals research, communicate, and process information.

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Our Book Club discussion reinforced an important takeaway. Technology will continue to evolve, but the principles that guide our work, including accuracy, diligence, and professional judgment, remain constant. As AI tools become more integrated into everyday use, the industryâ??s challenge will be ensuring that innovation enhances our work while maintaining the standards of reliability and trust that real estate transactions depend upon.

For more information on the VLTA Book Club, please check out the VLTA Book Club group on Tradewing.

If you missed the VLTA Book Club discussion for March, catch up and watch the recorded discussion HERE at your convenience.

Stay tuned â?? The next VLTA Book Club discussion will be on **Tuesday, April 14th at Noon**!

â??Unreasonable Hospitalityâ?• by Will Guidara is a book about transforming ordinary service into extraordinary experiences by giving customers more than they expect, using stories from his time at the world-renowned restaurant Eleven Madison Park (EMP) to illustrate how to create memorable moments for guests and employees alike. It details how EMP went from a struggling two-star restaurant to the best in the world through radical reinvention and â??over-the-top, bespoke hospitality,â?• like arranging a surprise sledding trip in Central Park for a family who had never seen snow. The book argues that this approach can be applied to any business, focusing on generosity, building exceptional teams, and fostering a people-first culture.

If you would like to join the VLTA Book Club, please reach out to VLTA at membership@vlta.org.



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