# Preface

Is it possible to describe a given historical period using a single word or phrase? And if it *is* possible, is it advisable? The answer to the second question is almost certainly "No," but that hasn't stopped the world's Big Thinkers from tackling the first question. For example, in 2010 the American Dialect Society voted for the Word of the Decade, meaning the years 2000 to 2009. The winner? *Google*, used as a verb — a good choice. In 2014 the writer Rex Sorgatz chose, for the same period, the term *long tail*: the huge array of products or data that are accessed infrequently but remain available. Apt, if perhaps a bit obscure.

I might as well wade into these perilous waters with my own nominee for word of the decade, although I'll use the period between 2006 and 2015. I'm going with the phrase *information at your fingertips*, the subject of the column that follows. Sure, we still love to Google the long tail, but now we do it instantly, no matter where we are, because our portable devices and ubiquitous networks give us access to information with just a few finger taps. Imagine: we now routinely carry the sum of the world's knowledge (or close to it) in our pockets and purses. What a sea change in our approach not only to facts, but also to entertainment, current events, and social contact. I realize that I'm playing fast and loose with the definition of "information" here, but that's really the point. It's *all* information now.

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