

The Information Revolution: For Good or Evil?

The information technology revolution is a key driving force for many changes throughout soci-

ety. Will these technologies help us alleviate our problems or aggravate them? Are there hidden

benefits and evils of the Information Society? And what will be the impacts on jobs, the environ-

ment, and the quality of knowledge itself? These questions were debated by a panel of experts at

a forum held by The Futurist magazine, and their differing perspectives are presented below.

Top 10 Reasons the Information Revolution is Bad for Us

By Micheal Marien

There is no doubt at all that an information revolution is happening, but there is considerable doubt about whether the positive impacts outweigh the negative impacts, both now and in the future.

Here is my top-10 list of negatives; I'll start at the bottom and work up to the number-one problem.

10. The information revolution is bad for equality, creating ever-greater social gaps within and between nations.

9. It's bad for quality of life. It speeds the pace of life and makes time increasingly scarce.

8. It's bad for privacy. Interlinked databases have your name, your numbers, and much more about you.

7. It's bad for democracy - so far, at least. Of course, there's the promise of enhanced citizen participation and electronic town meetings, but don't confuse the potential with the reality. Ironically, as a society becomes more complex, people are turned off of politics and turned on to an expanding variety of electronic entertainment.

6. It's bad for the environment. The sustainable society, which is something we need in the future, is being displaced by the glitzy Information Society. It is a distraction from the necessity of building a sustainable society.

5. It's bad for jobs. As new software becomes more widespread, we can expect more unemployment and under-employment.

4. It's bad for national security. We have the capacity to wage infowar, but we are also equally vulnerable to infowar and infoterrorism.

3. It is bad for law and order. Computer crime is a major cost for business and government, and much of it is not recorded.

2. It is bad for the future. Why? Quite possibly because infotech and infosociety have made the future unappealing and created a reaction against the future by those who, unconsciously or not, want to stop the world and get off.

1. The number-one negative is that having much more information is bad for our heads. It is bad because it produces infoglut, which may well be the greatest under-studied problem of our time.

Michael Marien is a contributing writer associated with the World Futurist Society and "The Futurist" publication. To comment on his article, he can be reached by e-mail at wfsinfo@wfs.org.

INFORMATION is the Critical Resource of the Future

By Harlan Cleveland

INFORMATION expands as it is used. Information is less hungry for other resources; the higher the tech, the less energy and raw materials are needed. Information can, and increasingly does, replace land, labor, and capital. Information is readily transportable. Information leaks. Information is shared, not exchanged; it gives rise to sharing transactions, not to exchange transactions.

The Fairness Revolution

The growing importance of information in creating wealth has turned out to be very good news for countries less endowed with geological riches and arable land. Japan, for example, with virtually no conventional fuels or useful minerals, with a short growing season and much farmland we would call marginal, was forced by physical poverty to bet on the only sure resource it had: the minds of its own people.

By contrast, in the countries whose people have been kept in ignorance, it hardly seems to matter which riches lie in the space they occupy. Most of their citizens be-

come the peasants of the information society.

So in a rapidly changing information environment there is going to be much less excuse for depriving whole populations of the benefits of development that could benefit the many, not only the few.

We're living at a very special moment in humankind's long ascent toward civilized behavior. It is the consequence of the enormous

advances of science and technology, sparked by information science and information technology, which have now made the human species, for the first time, the lead actor in its own evolution.

Harlan Cleveland is a contributing writer associated with the World Futurist Society and "The Futurist" publication. To comment on his article, he can be reached by e-mail at wfsinfo@wfs.org.

LOCAL HOT SPOT



REST, RELAXATION AND REJUVENATION.

They're all yours in our beautiful lakeside setting. Indulge yourself in a pampering massage. Relax in our natural mineral hot spring pools. Sip a cappuccino at Miss Margaret's Espresso Bar. Then savor the live entertainment and Fraser Valley

cuisine of the Copper Room. Midweek and weekend packages available. Only 1-1/2 hours from Vancouver and 3 hours from Seattle, the Harrison Hot Springs Resort is an all-time favorite throughout the Pacific Northwest.

FOR RESERVATIONS, CALL 1-800-663-2266.



BRITISH COLUMBIA • CANADA, VOM 1K0 • www.harrisonresort.com
OPERATED BY: HOSTMARK HOSPITALITY GROUP

McMurphy's

Appliance Center

Sales • Service • Parts

4011 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Ave. • Portland, OR 97212

288-3233