

Looking Ahead: **Keeping Up With the Future II**

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My previous "Looking Ahead" (*RTM*, Nov.-Dec., 2003, p.6) described a number of publications that I recommend for anyone who wishes to understand the future.

I also observed that the Internet is a rich source of information, insight, opinions, judgments, facts, and fancy in dealing with the future.

Here now are some of my favorites among the many electronic publications in this field.

- theFuture@arlingtoninstitute.org is a gold mine of useful futures-related information and broadly eclectic in the categories that it covers.
- Richer in material but less convenient to access is the "KurzweilAI.net Weekly Newsletter," available at news-admin@kurzweilai.net. Summaries of material are numerous but tantalizing. You may have to go through more maneuvers than you would like to be certain it is something of interest. Available on a daily and weekly basis, my preference is the weekly one.
- The National Technology Agency of Finland publishes a nicely informative newsletter, Newsletter@tekes.fi.
- The Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies, which has some 130 corporate clients, puts out the interesting Newsletter@iff.dk. While it largely covers the events at the Copenhagen Institute, that in itself is useful because it highlights topics they and their European clients are interested in.
- The "MEME Pool" is published by Drachma-Denarius, a firm working in applied futures research and strategic planning. Raymond Bouchard is in charge. The short newsletter, typically three or four pages, is well worth your attention because it not only reports but expresses a fair amount of judgment and opinion. bouchard9520@rogers.com
- "FAST" is French Advances in Science and Technology, a review of mainstream French press on issues of science and technology. It comes out twice a week, and is very well written. It is the product of one hand and certainly essential reading for anyone with a generic interest in science and technology. fast@ambafrance-us.org
- Technologies Future Inc. is a well-established and highly-regarded futures firm specializing, in my judgment, in the use of quantitative tools and techniques. Its newsletter info@tfi.com tells a fair amount about the Austin, Texas company and also tends to be somewhat more opinionated in its writings than merely reportorial.
- Population must be a concern to anyone interested in the future. The U.S. Census Bureau has an informative website and issues biweekly announcements of new material, polly.a.gordon@census.gov. For those desiring more interpretive material, the best single source is the Population Reference Bureau in Washington, D.C. Its newsletter is prbnews@PRB.Org, and its primary value is to highlight new items coming out of the PRB. It publishes beautiful wall charts on the global and state-by-state populations.
- PRB also publishes a series of pamphlets, each developing a particular population problem or issue in substantial detail. Some of the topics are regional, like Appalachia; some are racial or ethnic, like Blacks and Hispanics; some deal with the growth patterns of population change. PRB is indispensable to anyone seriously concerned about the future of the U.S. or the world.
- The World Future Society has recently begun publishing "Futurist Update" at info@wfs.org. A recent issue that crossed my desk had treatments of anti-terrorist groups, building a virtual planet, the future of beauty, and cybercrime. In addition, it carries news on activities and future plans and programs.
- Cyber security is becoming more and more prominent. An excellent source of information is "Security Update," security@eletters.sec.ziffdavis.com. It was that newsletter that gave me my first clear understanding of "SoBigF," words that cropped up on my computer screen about 30 times while I was writing this article. Fortunately, I followed the almost-universally - neglected advice, and did not open the attachment.
- A rather interesting newsletter by Kerry Richardson of Shaping Tomorrow has a nice, eclectic mix of brief article announcements. Recent topics I've noted are Wearable Technology, Future of Manufacturing, Apple in 2008, Universal Democracy, and Africa's Future. info@shapingtomorrow.com
- The Global Future Forum has an email, atchristine.carroll@thegff.com, that is meaty and well worth your attention. It has recently dressed up its website dealing with four subjects: business, people, technology, and the globe. For example, in July they dealt with a clutch of topics on the future of business, education, including the future of the MBA, and the new century and its new challenges.
- "What's New Now" from Ziff Davis, whatsnewnow@eletters.wnn.ziffdavis.com, tends to emphasize new information technology developments and gives enough information to be informative. It also has links to other sites.

- One of the most successful foresight programs anywhere was begun several years ago in the United Kingdom; it was so successful that it has become institutionalized in the Office of Science and Technology's Foresight Directorate (stuart.hobhs@dti.gsi.gov.uk, www.foresight.gov.uk). Getting on their distribution list is worthwhile because their foresight project is totally comprehensive in touching on all aspects of the future of the United Kingdom.
- Various futures firms issue newsletters. One coming out from the Institute for Alternative Futures, newsletter@altfutures.com, presents in-house news but also digests new activities and conclusions from its reports. It is often pleasantly didactic.
- A new venture, which could either be extremely useful or a bust, is at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, from a joint program of the philosophy department and the MBA program. Calling it a collaborative leadership course, they are soliciting people in organizations to send in questions for them to evaluate for importance and relevance to their programs. If everything looks good, a group of students undertake to work and report on the particular futures topic. I suggest you check their website and judge whether it's worth either your time or your involvement, <http://www.predictionsscience.org>. Click on the Projects tab.
- Offering great promise in identifying and organizing information about the future are a new pair of sites presenting links in 65 categories to trends and futures on the web: www.creax.net with 700 creativity and innovation links and trends.creax.net with 500 future and trend links. The sorting of items leaves a lot to be desired but time and experience should take care of that.
- This writer does not have a newsletter but he has a website presenting or noting 275 of his articles about the future, and other related materials which you are invited to examine for relevance to your interests. www.josephcoates.com.