

Forum

Are you ready for this?

Jeff Jeske
FACULTY ADVISOR

Busy people that we are, we may find it difficult to know about, let alone understand, the profound changes overtaking modern society.

What current trends may affect us significantly in the coming decades? What choices should we make now to prepare?

Thus the importance of "futurists."

Whether directly on target or not, forward-looking thinkers such as Joseph N. Pelton, professor at George Washington University's Institute for Applied Space Research and director of the Accelerated National Science Program in Telecommunications and Computers,

e-Sphere

The Rise of the World-Wide Mind

give us coordinates to think about in planning for the future.

In his recent book *E-Sphere: The Rise of the World-Mide Mind* (Quorum, 2000), Pelton makes numerous predictions. Some may be familiar, others not. Among the most interesting:

* By 2005, at least one billion people will be linked world-wide by the Web. The current Internet growth rate in Africa is 80%, in Asia 110%, in South America 125%.

* Within a decade, hand-held wireless devices with voice input and output will be your primary means of access to this network.

* By 2010, 60-80 million people worldwide will be tele-commuters, working at

home or nearby as instantaneous broadband & satellite communication eliminate the importance of physical proximity to a central workplace. This development will enable de-urbanization and energy savings.

* You may find yourself competing for work with electronic immigrants from anywhere in the world.

* Prepare for the 168-hour work week (computers and automated systems never sleep).

* The process of "disintermediation" will continue, eliminating such intermediaries as travel agents and pharmacists. Any job that can be reduced to a series of algorithms supported by databases is at risk of being automated -- even the jobs of engineers and scientists.

* China will become the number-one national economy. The top economic tier world-wide will shift to the Asia-Pacific region. Globalism, however, will become the rule in business. The international corporate trade environment will make the notion of "national economies" increasingly irrelevant.

* Information, which currently is doubling every five years and growing at a rate that is at least 200,000x faster than that of the human population, will soon be over a million times faster. Information management will become increasingly essential.

* The current model of higher education, in which classes of students take prepackaged disciplinary courses in lockstep pace at "brick & mortar" institutions, is already obsolete.

* But...as complexity continues to grow and left-brain activities continue to become automated, creative, artistic, and intuitive abilities will be increasingly prized. The most valued schools will be those which teach students to question, to challenge, to think.

The GUILFORDIAN

STAFF MEETINGS ARE MONDAYS AT 7:30 P.M. IN THE PASSION PIT.
ALL ARE WELCOME.

Statement of Purpose: The Forum exists to facilitate dialogue and expression on matters of importance to Guilford College and its mission. Toward this end, active community participation in these pages is vital.

Editorial Policy: Every effort will be made to print appropriate submissions of editorials, cartoons, and letters to the editor. They must be signed, with the phone number of the author or artist included and turned in to the box outside the publications suite by 3:00 on Monday before that Friday's publication date. Editorials must be no longer than 400 words and letters to the editor must be no more than 250 words. The Guilfordian reserves the right to edit submissions for grammatical correctness and brevity.

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