

Trend and Data Analysis

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Trends and Issues: society, the Individual, and the Professions

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A mother is waving to her little ones on the beach as she types a message to the office on her Blackberry. A traveling salesman holds meetings in Starbucks locations around the globe, while a teenage girl is dumping her latest boyfriend by text message on her way to plug in for her online computer class. “Nomadic computing will certainly usher a new kind of lifestyle, a truly nomadic lifestyle” (Jao). It seems to the casual observer that we are currently experiencing this new lifestyle.

The Rand Corporation with the National Intelligence Council conducted a foresight activity to show “significant and dominant global impacts by 2020” made by “potential global technology trends and their broader social effects.” (Silberglitt, iii). This study was completed to help inform US policymakers how “world developments could evolve, identifying opportunities and potentially negative developments that might warrant policy action” (v).

The study concluded that more technologies are likely to converge and increase functionality of mainstream digital products. These products include:

- ◇ Cheap solar energy collection, conversion, and storage,
- ◇ Rural telephone and internet connections using wireless communications,
- ◇ Devices that offer anywhere, anytime access,
- ◇ Genetically modified crops,
- ◇ Rapid bioassays,
- ◇ Better water purification and decontamination,
- ◇ Targeted drug therapies and surgical methods, tissue engineering,
- ◇ Cheap autonomous housing,
- ◇ Green manufacturing,

- ◇ Radio frequency tagging and tracking of commercial products,
- ◇ Hybrid vehicles,
- ◇ Pervasive sensors,
- ◇ Wearable computers, and
- ◇ Quantum cryptography.

The convergence of these technologies will change lifestyles. “Technology will encourage people to work and entertain themselves at home. [We see this trend occurring now.] Thus, there will be compelling reasons for people to retreat to their homes for both convenience and privacy” (189). This change of venue for many activities will affect the urban landscape.

Tsai theorizes that ‘New Urbanism’ will call for urban planners to plan for mix-use space into human scale neighborhoods that will mix green space and recreational space (10). “Already, architects are redesigning offices and universities; more flexible spaces for meeting people, fewer private enclosures for sedentary work” (The Economists, 16). We may soon be giving up our gas guzzling cars to live in the ‘human-scape’, developing healthier lifestyles, eating better foods, and working in industries that do not currently exist.

These converging technologies will also have a significant effect on my profession. As a teacher, I recognize the face of education is quickly changing and I am hoping to change with it. Buchen believes that “education in 2025 will be totally decentralized, offering parents, students, adult learners, and citizens in general a dazzling menu of choices. Many people will opt for an amalgam of different educational sources

that may be altered as desired. Whatever the selection, students and their parents—not schools—will drive educational choice”(45). Personally, I will be encouraged to see parents step up their involvement in the education of their children. As a parent, I look forward to the opportunity to help my daughter choose from a variety of new educational choices. For the teacher that I am, I recognize that my role must change to maintain a position in education.

Technology makes class size reduce to one student at a time. Feedback is immediate and focused. Technology is making it possible to forego the standard school day. “School days can be extended easily and laptop computers mean education can continue during vacations and trips”, and on the move (Buchen, 49). This phenomenon is occurring in colleges across the country. We call it distance learning. Already we are seeing these technologies become available for high school students. This trend will continue and will be the solution for the growing shortage of qualified teachers.

I look forward to the possibilities of living in a new urban human-scape where I can use the computer on my arm to order my groceries from the corner market while checking my email, sending some reports into work, and communicating with my daughter in Paris. I only hope as an educator, I will soon develop the ability to transmute my employment into a new converging technological role. This degree is an attempt to redefine myself and align my career with the advancements in technology.

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