THE CHRISTIAN LIBRARIAN®
JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN LIBRARIANS

Volume 43 | Issue 2 Article 8

2000

Techtrends

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THE CYBER-LIBRARY IN 2020

Michio Kaku, author of *Visions: How Science will Revolutionize the 21st Century*, spoke at the most recent Texas Library Association conference in Dallas, Texas. A summary of his comments follow.

Some predictions have come true and some predictions have been way off the mark. Yogi Berra once said "Prediction is very hard to do, especially if it is about the future."

There are three phases of the adoption of any mass technology.

Phase One

One hundred people for 1 computer (IBM mainframe)

Phase Two

One person for 1 computer (The personal computer)

Phase Three

One hundred computers for 1 person Ubiquitous computing

By the year 2020, computer chips will cost 1 cent because of Moore's Law - computer power doubles every 18 months. Which means that the price for computer chips drop in half every 18 months. Computer technology will be embedded in almost everything. Musical greeting cards, which contain disposable music-making chips, have more computer power than the computers that existed before 1950.

A wall screen (a computer monitor the size of a wall) currently exist and cost about $15,000. The price will drop in half every 18 months so that by 2020, most libraries will have one or more wall screens in every room of the library. Screens will be so cheap that they will be everywhere.

Software agents (computer software) will perform a wide variety of tasks. For example, a agent will prepare a personal newspaper called the "Personal Me" (news that is of interest to you will be assembled for your review).

Smart "paper" – microprocessor's embedded in paper which can change the text, on command — will not have replaced the book by 2020. We will have unlimited access to cyber-libraries using a variety of access devices.

The prime use of paper, historically, has been to record information and references. But that function is shifting to the Internet. The new purpose of paper will be to educate, thrill, to invoke passion within people using books. "Scrap paper" in the future will actually be disposable computer chips and we will dispose of them when we are done.

Impact of TV on the movie industry. Originally the movie industry feared the TV industry but today there are more movies than ever. Similarly, the movie industry feared the VCR but now, due to the VCR, some movies make more money on VCR distribution than in the movie theaters.

The Internet is filled with too much noise. In the future, the Internet will provide News Journals written by editors that you trust.

Libraries will shift through the noise of the Internet to get to knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom is what people are looking for.

Artificial intelligence will not have much of an impact in our lives by 2020. The most powerful robot built today has the collective intelligence of a "retarded cockroach." Robots, and by implication computers, do not have common sense. Computers are adding machines but have great difficulty in "thinking."

Computers will be able to recognize faces of people and provide information to you about the last time you saw or spoke to the individual.

After 2020, we will no longer use silicon as the base material for computer chips. Rather, we are likely to move to optical computers.

In short, Michio Kaku's book *Visions* is highly recommended - and I bet you can borrow a copy from your local public library! ✝

(continued)

classroom in a substantial manner—a collaboration that demands more time—it soon becomes obvious that the library does not have the personnel resources to support an expanded teaching presence. Lacking the number of faculty that are hired to teach English, for example, any significant success of the library instruction program ultimately means the collapse of the whole enterprise. In other words, success leads to failure. Librarians cannot expand their teaching roles significantly *and* get all their other work done, unless there are substantial additions to the number of librarians on a campus (and this seems unlikely given the lack of an institutional mandate mentioned earlier). The best way to cope is to be ineffective, but this is hardly an exciting goal.

Finally, librarians have failed to be recognized as equals by faculty for very good political reasons. Faculty often possess institutional power. They may be the only *de facto* union, especially on Christian campuses. Why would they want to weaken, or share, that power? I believe they are as jealous of librarians gaining some of their power as they are of giving administrators any more than is absolutely necessary. Although most faculty are fine individuals, corporate arrogance often typifies faculty culture; that is, when faculty act or think as a group, they tend to adopt a stance of superiority. This corporate snobbery is the dominant model on secular campuses, and unfortunately is often accepted uncritically on Christian campuses. Until librarians can hang their Ph.D.s on the wall—and do what faculty do—they will not be accepted as equals. ✝