

**FUTURE***takes*

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### The Think Tank

**The topic: Implications of the Information Age.** Information overload, the explosion of knowledge, and the information age itself have already made pervasive changes in the way people live and work. For example:

- Peer-reviewed journals often accept and publish research that they wrongly deem original, well-meaning though they may be. The reason is that even the best referees and editors are not always aware of similar research published years ago.
- Several members of the US Congress utilize the services of paid professional tax preparers, because they do not understand the complexities of the tax laws that *they* enacted!
- In some parts of the world, many physicians are too busy seeing patients to keep up with the new advances in medicine. Instead, they are sometimes forced to rely on the pharmaceutical manufacturers for this information.
- In addition, one might link information overload and voter time constraints to sound bite politics (pervasive in the US) that often quote political candidates out of context.

Where is all of this leading?

1. Are “Renaissance Men” (and women) relics of the past? That is, will we no longer find people who are masters of several professions or fields of knowledge, because there is too much knowledge to master? Will we see more specialists and fewer generalists, or is there a countertrend?
2. Will the Internet redefine research “thoroughness”? That is, if a well-scoped Web search leads to 3,000 hits, how many of these sites will a researcher or staff member be expected to visit – especially in a society already characterized as “chronologically challenged” (that is, not enough hours in the day)?
3. How will book reading be impacted by the Internet and the knowledge explosion? (Disregard the participants in the Futurist Book Group – we know that they are diehards!)
4. Will the classics exist in the year 2050? If so, what literature and other works of today will be the classics of tomorrow – and by what criteria will they earn that status?
5. How else will the knowledge explosion impact education at various levels?
6. Will sound judgment give way to an over-reliance on information – a possibility that has been suggested even for military commanders?
7. What is the long-term future of libraries and the academic “publish or perish” syndrome?
8. What is the long-term future of peer-reviewed journals? Of newspapers? Of magazines including this one?

9. What is the next information frontier after the Internet and hypertext, which themselves represent an evolution beyond the conventional printed media and linear narrative?
10. What are other potential consequences of information overload and the knowledge explosion?

*Share your thoughts! If you would like for your thoughts to be considered for publication as commentary, send them to [forum@futuretakes.org](mailto:forum@futuretakes.org).*