

Home

About Us

New Enterprises

Success Stories

Spirit Farms

Asset Mgmt.

AV Room

Maps

Archive

Mailbag

Advance Search

"The Ambiquity of the Present"

Supplemental Material Prepared for the Library of Congress

Leadership Lecture Series

June 25, 1998

Donald G. Jones

President, Library of Congress Millennium Foundation and Spirit Enterprises, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

It is because of this lady, Mary F. Jones - my MOM, that I feel comfortable and confident about being here today. I feel like we are family. My MOM is a librarian - precisely, a clerk typist in the 1950's - a cataloguer. The work hours at the Illinois State Library were Monday through Friday, 8 to 5 and Saturdays, 8 to Noon. Between ages 8 and 10, I accompanied my Mom to work. I would sit on the floor near her desk or go to Saturday morning nature and travel lectures in an auditorium just like this one. It is only recently at midlife that I have realized what an advantage this gave me in my life - access to knowledge and ideas at an early age. The travel lectures and stories of far away places in the tradition of great adventure authors came to have a significant impact on a world adventure that happened in my life. Because my Mom programmed me at an early age to come to the Library of Congress on June 25th at 10 AM, I feel like I belong here, I'm with people I know and deeply respect, you are like my Mom. We also understand Tradition. There is also a Mary F. Jones who graduated in May. And as a lifetime cataloguer, every Thanksgiving Mom says to me, "Did you ask Dr. Billington if they are saving all those catalogue cards? I sure hope they are."

What I hope you are about to experience is a simulation of an entrepreneur's thought process, analysis and suggested actions centered on information technology and focused on the Library of Congress.

You are in leadership roles during the period labeled the Information Age. A lot of stress. A lot of uncertainty. A lot of ambiguity. So I have chosen, "The Ambiguity of the Present" as the title for this analog presentation. My goal is to bring added clarity and perspective to the technology events that are happening at such an extraordinary rate of change engendering anxiety and fear and clashing with Tradition and Harmony. A Texas House Speaker, Gib Lewis, may have said it better, "There's a lot of uncertainty that's not clear in my mind."

This has happened before. It happened to my Mom and you - Automation of Libraries in the 1950's and 60's. I submit it was good then, it is good now and it will all work out for the better. You are entitled to a disclosure of my ideological perspective and belief.

Communication is good. It brings people and ideas together. Any technology system that enhances communication among people has a potential for good.

We are told there is an Information Revolution. I declare the Revolution is over at the Library of Congress. We can celebrate the victory. Many of you and your associates are in mourning of the loss of the past. If I were asked to analyze what the Revolution was about, it would be the patrons choice of:

Checking Out Information Versus Checking out Books.

To clarify the ambiguity, blur, the digital technology Revolution began here in 1992 with FTP, File Transfer Protocol, seven years ago. Or more likely, 30 years ago, when the IBM 3084 mainframe computer began service in the cataloging distribution service (CDS). At its high point, 60 million catalog cards (analog) for the bibliographic database identifying the 17 million books in the Library of Congress. Catalog cards were circulated to 213,000 libraries around the World (UNESCO). By 1996, fewer than 30,000 analog catalog cards were computer printed (analog). On April 10, 1998, a technology cycle/era ended when the IBM 3084 was powered down, resulting in \$1 MM savings, and the bibliographic records were transferred to the digital ITS system, giving faster and better service. The process of technology Revolution continued in 1993 with LOCIS (catalog access to the public). 1993 LC Marvel (gopher). 1994 National Digital Library. 1995 THOMAS. 1996 to 1998 web home pages, online access and incredible, unprecedented access to content in many of the 20 Divisions of the Library of Congress.

The Revolution has been won by digital online services. A painful, [One day snapshot, (June 1st): The Library of Congress' web site had 1.1 MM transactions from 133 countries, 55% domestic, 45% international, 10% Library of Congress, 8% Education, 2% United States Government. THOMAS had 325,000 transactions from 103 countries, 68% domestic, 32% international, 1% Library of Congress, 6% Education, 20% United States Government. Analog Services Transactions data snapshot from 1993 through 1997: Walk-in (150,000 a year) service transactions, within Library of Congress (500,000 a year), CRS (115,000 a year).] I have been asked, "What is the criteria an entrepreneur uses to gauge success?" The question helps to explain a magnificent leadership and discipline. Define success before you begin so that you will know that you have arrived at a successful moment and then celebrate. And reset the stake and proceed to do it again. One of the difficult management dilemmas of IT is that success

with these services creates more demand. There are challenges in managing success and decline. The culture of bureaucracies and government sometimes is "wait and delay". That culture also exists in business where many CEO's have an attitude of hoping their retirement will come sooner than stunning disruption to their business model brought on by IT. I assure you the status quo is impossible to protect in this era. One consequence of digital technology is that bureaucratic thinking is not defensible or sustainable. It will be attacked.

Stories: Funk and Wagnell, White and Yellow Pages Phone Books, Encyclopedia of Britannica. Kids 10, 20 and 30 will assault and abolish those types of linear structures and hierarchies. The concepts of this time include. "The process is the product, readers are the authors, old things are done new ways, new things are done old ways." These are ambiguous, but real, concepts that are difficult to come to terms with in the present.

What are the Questions? As a lifelong learner, I have observed that the great teachers come to the classroom prepared with great questions. It is the struggle for the answers that is life, is work. So in that tradition here are some questions for you:

- How will people in 200 years judge your leadership of this IT epochal event?
- Who are the audiences of the future?
- What would happen if the franchise of the Library declines or becomes obsolete due to new publishing business models?
- If paper based industries sectors decline, what will be the impact on the Library?
- What is the value of the Library of Congress' imprimatur?
- Should privatization of value added services be part of the Library's future?
- What should the Global service model of the Library be?
- What are the archival storage needs and unforeseen access policy issues of this new world of Library customer service?
- The pace of IT change is confusing, puzzling, ever intimidating - makes you feel upside down, dizzy. How many learned about computers in school?

It is a struggle for most, especially anyone over 30. Imagine being a College President. Imagine being in so many other professions - all challenged, all struggling with IT innovation.

Story of University of Michigan President and Wellesley College President (Digital Audio). There is a new world order caused by this pace of change. Here is one view of it. Those of us who did not learn about computers in school are emigrants into this new world, those who are trained and grow up with IT are natives. Demographically, this is age 30. Within that grouping, we refer to Kids age 30 and under. In the US, 120 MM are 18 and under, 42%. In the World, 3.9 billion Kids - 65% under 18. In the business world

at present, a leadership method for IT ideas is, Ask The Kids. In education, the collaborative creation of curriculum is, Ask The Kids. At the Library of Congress, it is Analog reference service policy born out of protecting scholarly material not to admit/service kids 12 and under and only upon special arrangements to serve kids 18 and under.

And the pace of change will continue. A very current event, portable book players. (Explain developments, exhibit.) And the pace of change will continue in the next 18 months with the coming into service of global satellite systems: Iridium, Teledesic, GlobalStar, that will further accelerate access and transactions of voice and data. The science is based on factual complex mathematical process, such as the Pythagorean Theory. The math has been interpreted into anglicized word pictures that have been invented, called Moore's Law - science, math, technology exist looking ahead five years for rates of communication to double every 18 months. The result is Internet traffic is doubling every 100 days, resulting in an annual growth rate of more than 700% Cellular services will be retrofitted and to communicate data and E-mail without modems. I am certain about the science and sociology of information technology and I report to you with certainty that imminent changes in IT have been described as unimaginable, an understated hyperbole. There is NO ambiguity about this. We live in a world where the self organizing Internet is the prevailing model of communications and where centralized control is falling from favor.

What is the authenticity of Digital - Online Internet based communications:

Exhibits:

- Radio - TV - Cable - Internet Growth
- Graphs - Email Use
- California News Preference
- Business Trends in E-commerce
- But why? What is the deeper sociological meaning?
- New Frontier of new hope is one explanation.
- Human collaboration over the Internet is extremely rich, i.e. communication is good.

A literary, pundit has speculated, "The more we know, the more wonderful consciousness is." This same author, reflecting on digital IT trends, was asked if he had concerns. "Yes, how do we, the creators, get paid?"

Happiness is more data/information.

In the world of business, E-commerce is 2 years old. The Internet is thought of as a New Economy with more extraordinary business model innovations to come. Why does this matter to Library audiences? It matters because here in Washington, a teacher spends an average of 3 minutes personal individual time per child. It matters because 10% of US citizens have passports, 90% do not. It matters because "The Library's Mission is to make its resources available and useful to Congress and the American people and to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future generations." How are we to know what's out there? Not likely many will drive around the world. These forces of change present all sorts of ill feeling, infringement on tradition if you're a pessimist. All sorts of possibilities if you're an optimist. It is just as exciting and formidable as driving around the world. I recommend a drive around the world to learn about pessimism and optimism.

I was asked by a well spoken, articulate gentleman in New Delhi, India, with a most sincere expression, "Why would you want to do that?" The answer I gave him and I believe now is "To Know." To know every sunrise and sunset has significance for me. To know the common language of the world - a smile. To know attitude matters, more than questions about, "How do you eat, sleep, find car parts and get through it all? To know how precious and precarious life is through the death of Joseph and Rene Feit from Germany. The odds and risk of success and failure on this adventure: 100 cars began, 65 arrived, 35 failed and had to turn back. To know your family is waiting for you, makes the Journey worthwhile. Regarding the IT/Digital Transition process, you must try, you must make the Journey. One person, with a team effort, can drive Around the world.

- Imagine what one person could do - what you can do.
- Impact South Africa? This person did.
- Impact Entrepreneurial Graduate School Education in America. This person did.
- Invent Educational Technology. This person is.
- Impact creation of THOMAS and National Digital Library. I have.

You have the possible potential of leading the direction of the Library of Congress in the next 200 years. What are some real examples of information service inventions online? There are 350 MM web pages. We have selected a few for us to dream, imagine about.

Entrepreneurial Ideas:

- Idea: Online reading room for every American. Mathematically, this is possible. Begin with the kids.
- Idea: Kids Information Network (KIN) (42%), Seniors Information Network

(SNET) (13%) = 55% of Americans.

- Idea: New, timely information model for Library of Congress Staff. How are we doing?
- Idea: Collaborative strategy process with staff and customers.
- Idea: Global service concept and policy.
- Idea: Value added services on optional choice - archival reliant for growing revenues.
- Idea: Higher level vision and understanding, collaboration with US Congress and computing industry.
- Idea: Have a Digital Online Strategy Transaction Based rollout for Fiscal 2000, October 1, 1999.

Time to stretch. Use Human Internet. Exchange opinions, information. Back in 5 minutes.

"There is no way to avoid the future. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." - George Santayana "Contrary to popular opinion, it was inadvertent, gradual erosion, not the celebrated fire, that finally destroyed the world's first storehouse of universal knowledge in antiquity - the great Library at Alexandria - hastening humanity's descent into the Dark Ages. We cannot let this happen to the Library of Congress, the Alexandria Library of the modern world." - Dr. Billington, U.S. Congress, March 5, 1996 The Mission of the Library of Congress is transactions with the US Congress and the American People.

© Copyright 2000 Spirit Enterprise LLP. All rights reserved.