

## LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

**M**illion-dollar managers are quick to discard outdated technology, outdated equipment, even outdated ideas. Yet, in spite of the best efforts of caring teachers and parents (not to mention the odd futurist), outdated models of knowledge, learning and teaching still dominate the school systems.

"There is great irony in this," says Richard Slaughter, founding professor of the Australian Foresight Institute at Swinburne University.

"All teaching and learning has an inherent orientation toward the future. You can learn from the past – but you can't change it. You always

learn for the future. Every act of teaching and learning refers forward to the future that you are anticipating, planning, working towards or trying to avoid. Foresight, or more simply 'thinking ahead', is ubiquitously necessary in everyday life. Human beings simply could not function without the ability to anticipate, to assess alternative courses of action and to evaluate outcomes. This is why futures studies, forward thinking, applied foresight have central roles in education."

So what's wrong with education in Australia today? Dr Slaughter puts it this way: "Successful systems are responsive to their environment. They are resilient, flexible and adaptive: we even call them learning systems. They are innovative and creative, and therefore participative, with shared ownership, shared responsibility.

"Does our education system look like that?"

On the contrary, he says, all too often our schools and school systems show a different set of characteristics.

"They are rigid hierarchies with top-down power structures. Inflexibility is a key feature "And their 'system imperatives' are not about people, society nor the future. Instead, they

## FUTURES BEYOND DYSTOPIA

Rick Slaughter's latest book, "*Futures Beyond Dystopia: Creating Social Foresight*", is to be launched by Professor Ian Lowe in Melbourne on March 4. Futures Foundation members wishing to attend can email [info@futurists.net.au](mailto:info@futurists.net.au) for details.

The book -- by one of the world's top futurists and with an introduction by Ken Wilber -- can be ordered at [www.routledgefalmer.com](http://www.routledgefalmer.com), in hard-back or paperback editions.

See p4 for more on its comprehensive content.

are largely abstract... too often about power, control, economy and efficiency."

So what would an ideal system look like? As is usually the case in futures work, this question leads to others. A consultative project undertaken by the St James Ethics Centre in Sydney drilled down to the next layer and suggested these further questions:

- what do we think is a 'good' society?
- why do we educate?
- how and what should we learn to achieve such a society?

Those questions in turn could lead us to the underlying concept that is the essence of futures work -- the notion that by challenging the way we think about existing systems, systems that have been locked in by time and chance, we can open up better options. As Rick Slaughter says, the whole point of studying futures is to understand alternatives as a context for making choices.



### INSIDE

- 3 What can managers learn from a primary school?
- 3 Futures education
- 4 Learning about learning
- 5 If teens will rule the world, should we hear what they say?
- 6 Global Futures Roundup
- 8 Signals in the Noise

## EDITORIAL

**O**ur theme for this issue is education and learning -- not just because this is a theme dear to the hearts of people who work in futures, but also because a number of Australian schools have joined the Futures Foundation this year. It's hard to think of a subject more critical to successful futures. Or to think of a group of people more important to our society's future than those who teach our children (except parents?). We look forward to supporting this group of members as they in turn support the growth and learning of the young people in their care.

And while we're talking about education, perhaps it's time for *Future News* to do it again? In our early years we ran regular educational stories about the field of futures studies. Times have changed and the frontiers have moved. So from our next issue we plan a new series of articles that, over the year, will build into a brief introduction to futures studies. At the same time we will also report back from the leading edge... especially the body of work that is converging into a new framework for futures. This includes the work of people like our own Rick Slaughter and Sohail Inayatullah as well as Ken Wilber, Riane Eisler, Don Beck, Chris Cowan and many more. Every time, every issue, we aim to provide value to members that will help them in their own efforts to create better futures. I can't think of a better reason to do it!

Jan Lee Martin

# Learning for the future (from page 1)

And he reminds us of our primal responsibility when it comes to education and learning:

"Humanity is now the dominant force on the planet. It therefore has a planet to manage. So far it is not doing too well and the life-support systems are under unprecedented stress. But this is not the only issue of concern.

"Beyond this are a series of technological revolutions... that promise to utterly transform human life and, indeed, the world: artificial intelligence, bio-engineering, life-extension, nanotechnology. Humanity is not yet prepared to deal with the tsunamis of change already visible.

"Those now in schools are the very people who will be living in the midst of the upheavals to come."

Why is it so hard to make changes?

Perhaps the core paradox is, after all, an economic one. Dr Peter Saul points out that we live at a time in history when education systems are highly correlated with the wealth of nations. Yet in Australia today, schools seem unable to tap the resources that could ensure the kind of education system that in turn could create a prosperous nation.

Public perception is that the problem belongs to the government. Everyone expects the government to "fix it" with more money. Other parties in the system feel powerless to make change. But is it unfair to blame the government? Perhaps government cannot unravel the knot by itself and maybe it can't even be done within a single term of office. And perhaps it can't be done just with money.

Maybe, though, instead of being an intractable problem, this could be an exciting opportunity to reframe the issue from a futures perspective. If everyone can see that the present system has problems, including alienation of both teachers and students, those responsible for the education system have a clear

mandate to reinvent it. That in turn could lay a solid foundation for genuine improvement in the system.

There is clearly a need to move beyond conflict toward collaboration. A useful feature of futures work is that it does not need to tackle conflict head-on. Placing the discussion of change in the future itself takes the heat out of current issues, allowing key parties to work together to design a better way.

Sharing the issues with stakeholders shares the problem and wins commitment to solutions. It doesn't need to be costly.

What, then, can we do to change the future of learning?

## ONE POSSIBLE APPROACH

First steps in a practical response to these issues might be to:

- reframe the problem so it belongs to the community, not only the government
- share ownership of the issues and the solutions with others in the system
- design some immediate courses of action that are seen by the electorate and by other stakeholders as constructive, as good ways of getting the system unstuck
- build new relationships with some of the players
- begin with simple, low-cost futures techniques that do not confront but open up new spaces for parties in conflict to discuss the issues, explore the alternatives and collaborate on solutions.

# What can managers learn from a primary school?

## Futures education

**Charles Brass goes to school for an evening, and discovers a culture that could teach business what it most needs to know**

**T**he only memory I have of my Grade 5 teacher," says Charles Brass, chair of the Futures Foundation, "is the blackboard ruler she wielded to great effect as she strived to impart what seemed to me to be her overriding values: conformity, obedience and rote learning. She probably even told me that these values would serve me well when I eventually entered the workforce.

"My daughter's Grade 5 teachers are also interested in imparting values which will stand her in good stead when she leaves school, but these have changed somewhat in 40 years. Now her teachers talk about the importance of teamwork, or being able to work with a wide variety of people to achieve useful outcomes. Courtney's teachers told me about a variety of simple techniques they use to make sure she will work collaboratively with everyone else in her grade (even the boys, to her dismay) before the end of the year.

"Her teachers told us that they knew our children would have many careers during their lives, possibly in different countries, and that without the ability to work productively with others they would not survive. "Despite all the claims made by modern corporations

**"Many schools are like little islands set apart from the mainland of life by a deep moat of convention and tradition. Across the moat there is a drawbridge, which is lowered at certain periods during the day in order that the part-time inhabitants may cross over to the island in the morning and go back to the mainland at night. Why do these young people go out to the island? They go there in order to learn how to live on the mainland."**

*Carr 1942*

about 'ensuring the employability of their employees', I can count the number of workplaces I know where such diversity is preached, and actually practised, on the fingers of one hand.

"The value of teamwork is not just espoused by a couple of enlightened teachers, it is an integral part of the way the school operates," Charles Brass said, after a fascinating parent information night.

"Not only do the teachers work as a team (they would make an ideal job-sharing team, though each currently has a full-time

job) but the whole school supports them.

"We didn't see much of the principal this night because his daughter is in Grade 3 and he was sitting in a circle with her teachers and the parents of her classmates. How many workplaces struggle to get any sense of teamwork between different floors, let alone between Branch Offices and Head Office? But then, how many CEOs sit in the audience at new employee induction programs to hear what they are being told?"

**"I sense there is now a global consensus on expectations for schools and this is the vision to which I subscribe. It may be summarised in these words:**

**'All students in every setting should be literate and numerate and should acquire a capacity for life-long learning, leading to success and satisfaction as good citizens and productive workers in a knowledge economy.'**

*Brian J. Caldwell, Professor and Dean of Education, Melbourne University*

**T**he World Futures Studies Federation has established a working group to give special attention to work in schools with children and teachers. According to David Hicks, author of *Lessons for the Future: The Missing Dimension in Education*, the group has a three-fold focus in relation to futures education:

- schools: primary and secondary
- teacher education: initial and in-service
- educational research: policy and practice.

In each of these areas, the group will address three main tasks:

- mapping: who is doing what, and where
- networking: making and extending contacts
- good practice: identifying its nature.

Initial steps are mapping what is already going on and beginning to exchange news and information. A directory of futures educators is now being compiled, and the group invites members of the WFSF to nominate themselves for the directory and perhaps the working group.

"If you work in schools, with teachers, with trainee teachers or you are an educational researcher interested in related issues, please join us. Once we have identified an active core group we can move on to further tasks."

Professor Hicks, who is at the Centre for Global & Futures Education, School of Education, Bath Spa University can be reached at [d.hicks@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:d.hicks@bathspa.ac.uk).

Contact the WFSF at [secretariat@wfsf.org](mailto:secretariat@wfsf.org)

# A SAGE ON A STAGE or A GUIDE BY THE SIDE?

There is an unresolved tension in higher education. It concerns particularly the final products. Employers want people ready to work. They want people prepared the same way they were – only better. Lawyers want people trained in the business of the law; engineers want people trained as engineers, ready to work, and so on. Educators march to a different drum. They want something different. They want to turn out people able to learn for the rest of their lives. They want people able to take charge of their own education in an environment that will change continuously and fast. Educators may be less concerned about content than potential employers. "Most employers want practical people with skills. With skills now, that can be used immediately. And they pay the salaries – so their views are important. However, leading organisations are recognising the need to value different skills from those acquired by learning content – skills such as the ability to learn quickly, the ability to work well with others, flexibility and resilience, creativity and more. It is almost self-evident that knowledge will change. It is only a little less evident that skills themselves will alter. Some jobs done now did not exist when some mature Australians were training. Content will alter enormously. Gone are the times when 'a sage on a stage' was what was called for in education. Now people need 'a guide by the side' – someone to work with them while they learn for themselves. So teachers will have to change too: more skill with the process of learning, less emphasis on what is learned.

**Peter Baume**

*The Hon. Professor Dr Peter Baume is a former Minister of Education. He was an early member of the board of the Futures Foundation and is currently Chancellor of the Australian National University.*

# LEARNING ABOUT LEARNING

Education comes from anywhere, often out of nowhere. How can people learn how to receive this learning? The answer becomes urgent as the pace of change quickens and knowledge explodes. This is a paradoxical moment for Australia. Just as the success of organisations now hinges on the maximisation of human potential, the intellectual, emotional and spiritual components of our schools and universities are falling into sharp decline. As if sensing this, corporations are cautiously receptive to a wide range of stimulating ideas, from systems thinking, multiple bottom line accountancy, industrial ecology, multiple intelligences, perpetual innovation, futures thinking and, yes, even spiritual leadership. As firms evolve from pyramids to networks, they are focussing on the kinds of talents and skills that will encourage creativity and collaboration, rather than instill obedience and stifle dissent. They seek such attributes as group empathy, adaptability, low self defensiveness, deep listening, the ability to tolerate failure and criticism, and learning how to thrive in an atmosphere of paradox and uncertainty. As globalisation pushes beyond big markets, hot brands and cheap labour, into areas of social justice, religion, sustainability, faked wars, theft of natural resources and the pillaging of indigenous intellectual property, we need more than platitudes from parliaments and boardrooms. Do we dare to foster a learning culture that puts a futures perspective at its core, and that honours history, science, commerce and the arts without being obsessed by the acquisition of personal wealth at all costs? Including the cost of Earth?

**Richard Neville**

*Richard Neville is a futurist, author, commentator and regular speaker on futures. He was a founding director of the Futures Foundation. For more of his challenging ideas, visit <http://www.richardneville.com.au>.*

# Futures Beyond Dystopia

The world we are living in is, in many respects, an illusion, writes Richard Slaughter in the introduction to this new book. "Or, to put it more precisely, it is founded on illusions. That is, much that is conventional, taken-for-granted, the 'way things are' does not stand up to close examination. The affluent Western world has become entranced by its wealth, its success and its ever more compelling technological prowess. But it pays little more than superficial attention to the consequences of its spiralling demands, to the ways it constantly transfers costs elsewhere and 'elsewhen' into the ever-receding future. Short-term thinking has become the norm and it protects us from ever taking seriously our collective attempts to consume the future.

"We need to see these phenomena much more clearly because, at present, they are leading us to a world that no sane person would choose for themselves, let alone hand on to their children. It is, in my considered view, a world that is stripped, mined out, polluted, denuded of non-human life and compromised beyond all hope of repair. It is a world that may also be overrun by machines we can neither see nor control. In other words the most likely futures before us are irredeemably Dystopian in nature." Using a new approach to futures that incorporates Integral Theory, he outlines futures tools and concepts to overcome this outcome.

Ken Wilber, who created Integral Theory, says in a foreword to the book: "Integral Future Studies is literally just beginning. This book is the first word, not the last word. But it is indeed an approach that changes profoundly the nature of the discipline. It is also an extraordinary opportunity to be on the ground floor of an historic shift in human understanding that promises to have such far-reaching consequences that the impact of a discipline like Integral Futures Studies can only be grasped by using.... Integral Futures Studies."

# If teens will rule the world, should we listen to what they say?

Young people named education as the top issue when they were asked "what are the three things changing in Australia today that most concern you?". Other top issues in the survey, conducted by the Business Council of Australia last year, were the environment, growing intolerance and racism and the treatment of immigrants and refugees. The 323 respondents were all under 30.

Asked "What are the three things that most concern you about your future over the next 20 years?" they expressed concern about housing affordability, career related concerns, the environment, financial security and unemployment/job security.

Education closely followed the environment when the young people were asked "What do you see as the three greatest challenges or issues for the government over the next 20 years?", with Australia's international relations and position in the world, and our ageing population.

And in answer to the final question, "What do you see as the three greatest challenges or issues for the Australian community over the next 20 years?" they responded consistently, identifying

- the environment
- improving sense of compassion, inclusiveness and community
- overcoming greater intolerance and racism
- multiculturalism, and the
- ageing population.

Specific concerns under the heading of education included

- cuts to university funding,
- the move to a 'user-pays' education system; and
- the redirection of funds from public to private schools.

Many linked the inaccessibility of quality public education to the development of a "tiered society", characterised by an ever-widening gap between the educated rich and the uneducated poor.

"Education is the great social leveller and Australia has been a country where anyone with the intelligence and determination could go to university and seek their preferred career. With up to 50 per cent of places now being given to people who couldn't get into the course on marks but happen to be rich or have rich parents this will reduce educational standards and make Australia more of a place where your opportunities are linked

## The teens who will rule the world

Today's teenage generation is the biggest the world has ever seen, according to a UN report released late last year. About half the people in the world are now less than 25 years old. Teenagers look set to become the largest, most vibrant adult workforce the world has known -- but the report warns that they are vulnerable.

Around 90 per cent of teenagers live in the developing world, and suffer poverty and poor education as well as high rates of HIV infection. Young adults aged 15 to 24 account for half of the five million new cases of HIV infection each year.

Young people are also most vulnerable to drug abuse, violence and sexual trafficking. The report notes the challenges of preventing early marriage and teenage pregnancy as well.

"We are at a time of crisis, but we also have an unequalled opportunity," said Thoraya Obaid, executive director of the UN Population Fund, when the report was launched. "If the health and social needs of today's teenage generation can be met, they could generate dramatic economic improvements."

to your family's wealth," said one respondent. Others were critical of what they perceived as

- the move of universities away from intellectual pursuits towards a more vocational orientation;
- trends towards corporate sponsorship of tertiary education; and
- the lack of respect paid by society to teachers and educators.

A substantial number listed access to education for themselves or their children as one of their major concerns about their own future.

Environmental concerns included a host of specifics, including logging; loss of biodiversity; land degradation; water conservation; and global warming. In particular, many were critical of the Australian government's refusal to adhere to the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions. "The amount of funding towards environmental programs by most of our State and federal governments has been pitiful compared to what is needed. This should be a priority as it is more costly to our future and our environment also has intrinsic value. Australia should ratify the Kyoto protocol, and take a global lead on environmental issues."

# State of the Future Index

Is the outlook for the future changing? If so, has it improved or worsened over the last decade? Is it likely to improve over the next few years? If so, what is responsible for the changed outlook?

Ted Gordon, senior research fellow for the Millennium Project at the American Council for the United Nations University makes a case for SOFI - an experimental approach to the statistical combination of historical records and forecasts of selected global indicators. It builds on previous work by the Millennium Project reported in *Future News* over the years. [www.millennium-project.org](http://www.millennium-project.org) [tedjgordon@worldnet.att.net](mailto:tedjgordon@worldnet.att.net)

## Of ants and men: self-organised teams in organisations

To cope with today's complex, fast-paced and ever-changing business environment, companies need to shift their structure to produce adaptive, highly responsive organisations. Some seek to achieve this goal through the use of teams. Humans are not the only creatures to use such teams: Carl Anderson (USA) and Elizabeth McMillan (UK) are researching whether insect societies may provide not just a valid metaphor but a model for organisational shift and effective function in human enterprise.

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## What is the future of reality?

The Association of Professional Futurists will consider "The Future of Reality" at its second annual meeting in Las Vegas in March.

"A combination of social, economic and technology forces is creating opportunities to manipulate, simulate, control, edit and mediate experience, ultimately shifting our notions about 'a reality' to one of 'multiple realities'", it says. "These altered realities in turn are giving rise to novel lifestyles, economic markets and political power. Immigrant communities, tourism in a security age, the digitisation of experiences and a host of other trends are increasingly moving the economy from 'real' experiences to artificial and virtual ones. This shift will spawn new product categories, create competition in peripheral or currently unknown places, and challenge our ability to plan and act. [www.profuturists.com](http://www.profuturists.com)

# TENSIONS IN AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE

Political will alone cannot help us realise the future, nor social will alone. It takes both, plus a compelling image of the desired future, an irresistible pull, Sohail Inayatullah told the Maroochy Seachange Conference this month. He sketched a journey from leadership to values and structures, in the context of organisations, cities and Australia as a whole. He discussed scenarios including *Fortress Australia* (back to roots - basic Aussie values as defined when current leaders were growing up); *Divided Australia* (age, house ownership, geography); *Lost Australia* (Asia, USA, England, but always through the eyes of the other instead of finding a local model; and - his own preferred future -- *Emergent Australia* (global plus local; gender partnership; sustainability and future generations; spiritual core; leadership plus transparent governance. Is it possible? Yes, he says, given political and social will, and an irresistible pull. And he includes the microvita, or spiritual dimension. "Essentially real social change is spiritual transformation, at inner and outer levels. Be the change you want to see. Even in urban design. [www.metafuture.org](http://www.metafuture.org)

## GLOBAL FUTURES ROUNDUP

## How foresight is being positioned inside today's organisation

We overlook the positioning and selling of foresight at our peril, writes Andy Hines, Ideation Leader with The Dow Chemical Company. He describes five categories of "positionings" --

- the insider-outside[r], whose role ranges from bringing in fresh thinking to shaking things up -- a change agent role;
- the stealth, the futurist in the closet who uses titles like 'special project' to avoid attack by those who still think that futurists are fortune tellers
- the evolved, corporate insiders who have been working with consulting futurists for several years and realise they are fairly well trained in futures
- the planners, strategic planning and other planning functions left after "the downsizing massacres of the 1980s" which can be reinvigorated and even reinvented with a fresh injection of foresight, and finally
- the public voice, an extremely rare positioning which may be the most highly evolved form of organisational foresight. The obvious example is BT futurist Ian Pearson, who represents his company as a public voice. [ahines@dow.com](mailto:ahines@dow.com)

## WHY WI-FI?

Wireless internet access is spawning a new kind of collaborative learning in the campuses of the world, reports William Mitchell from MIT. "My students all have laptop computers with wireless internet access, which they take to every class. Computers no longer create fixed, specialised sites of learning like the old computing centres. Instead... they encourage new combinations of research and learning... The campus is being used in a new way." Meanwhile the Fraunhofer Institute in Darmstadt, Germany has developed software that allows groups to work together on a wireless network that can overcome the problem of dominance by the loudest people. "It's a powerful tool for spontaneous cooperation that could have a big effect on e-learning and e-business."

*New Scientist 17 01 04, 07 02 04*

## Healthy&happy&healthy&happy&healthy Chicken&egg&chicken&egg&chicken&egg

Since we reported on the work of the Heartmath Institute in California (*Future News* March 03) and its study of the heart's real role in health and wellbeing, more evidence has emerged of the role of happiness and positive thinking in health and successful ageing.

George Vaillant's report of Harvard's long-term studies on "adult development", *Ageing Well* (2002) makes a fascinating read for anyone with an interest in the study of wellness rather than illness -- especially if they're over 50! It reports the results of three prospective studies: one of 268 Harvard graduates born around 1920, one of 456 socially disadvantaged inner city men born around 1930, and one of 90 middle-class, intellectually gifted women born about 1910. Each is the longest study of its kind in the world. Together they add up to a conclusion that suggests ageing well has a lot to do with such low-tech factors as forgiveness, gratitude and joy.

This thinking isn't confined to issues of life and death. Carnegie Mellon University professor Sheldon Cohen found that people who are happy, relaxed or otherwise positive were less likely to catch colds than unhappy or anxious subjects. People with a more negative emotional style (depressed, tense, hostile) were not necessarily more likely to become sick, but they were more likely to report more severe symptoms of illness.

A team of Italian researchers has also found positive associations between reduced vulnerability to disease and attitude, quoting factors like autonomy, competence, being open to new experiences, positive relationships, goals and purpose and self-acceptance.

## Oz "plantic" a world first

A new material that works like plastic, is made from corn starch and breaks down in water is an exciting Australian "first" for sustainability, reports the *National Business Bulletin* (January 04). "Our product is fully biodegradable, and importantly, is very competitive in price when compared with commonly used petrochemical based plastics," said David MacInnes, CEO of Plantic Technologies. Cadbury Schweppes is the first company to offer the product to consumers: "Now, just disposing of the packaging can be as much fun as eating the chocolates," they say. Plantic materials simply dissolve and break down to stable and safe carbon dioxide and water in virtually any outdoor environment -- compost, soil, a stream or the sea. It degrades as quickly and effectively as any household leftover vegetables and can be deposited in compost bins or worm farms.

## What happens in networks?

Researchers around the world are studying the behaviour of networks from physicists to medieval heretics. David Kempe and colleagues at Cornell University in New York developed an algorithm to identify the most influential people in a community of 10,750 particle physicists. They found the people most able to influence large proportions of the network may not be the ones with the most direct contacts: it's not who you know... it's who they know that counts. Meanwhile Andrew Roach of the University of Glasgow discovered a parallel between his study of the Inquisition, and the work of an economist friend who was studying networks. The common thread comes from "scale-free networks", first identified by Albert-Laszlo Barabasi who analysed the links between websites.

*New Scientist 16 08 03, 15 11 03*

## Cheap by choice: the new frugal consumer

Sarah Todd, a researcher with the University of Otago in New Zealand, warns marketers not to overlook a trend to non-consumption as a lifestyle option. She told a conference of marketing academics in Adelaide that frugality was on the rise and was a "swing against the hedonistic and out-there consumption of the 1980s". The new consumer was less a "tightwad" than a conscientious objector to over-consumption.

"Frugal customers are more likely to be environmentally friendly and to think long-term. They recycle and reuse rather than replacing," she said. "They want to simplify their lives." These consumers are likely to be older and wiser, with 25-29-year-olds the least frugal of any age group.

# Signals in the noise

## Confronting Empire

“Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of its oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness -- and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we have been brainwashed to believe,” Arundhati Roy told her audience at Porto Alegre in Brazil last year.

“The corporate revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling -- their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability.

“Remember this: we be many and they be few. They need us more than we need them.

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

*New Renaissance*

[www.ru.org](http://www.ru.org)

1180

## Sensory overload and sign language

Researchers are finding that our brains were never designed for this fast-paced, multi-tasking, socially disconnected 21st century life, writes Carey Goldberg. Others are finding ways to start dealing with the messages earlier: the *New York Times* reports the growing popularity of teaching babies a sign language to establish communication long before the muscles of the tongue can develop speech.

*Sydney Morning Herald*

17 07 03, 01 02 04

1181

## Planet under stress

We need to restructure our economy in order to save the environment -- and we need to do it at wartime speed, writes Lester R. Brown of the Worldwatch Institute. And, he says, the world can restructure its economy quickly if it is convinced of the need to do so. For example, tax and subsidy shifting promise both gains in economic efficiency and reductions in environmental destruction, a win-win situation.”

*The Futurist*

December 2003

1182

## Money talks

One of the world's richest men, George Soros, argues that President Bush's policy since September 11 has eroded democracy in the US. “By abusing the position the US occupies in the world, the extremists have made our nation weaker, not stronger,” he says. His eighth book is a savage critique of the Bush administration.

*The Bubble of American Supremacy*

Allen & Unwin 2004

1183

## Growing pressures on corporations

Business faces more risks and more surprises as the trend to challenging growing corporate power grows, with pressures for more social responsibility, attention to stakeholders, sustainable values, better logistics, redesigning boards and accounting procedures. Ten new books look at changing relationships between organisations and their host communities.

*Future Survey*

November 2003

1177

## Go with the flow

A mysterious phenomenon that has defied explanation for 100 years holds the secret to keeping everything from cornflakes factories to fertiliser plants running smoothly. An experiment by Marconi which kicked off the telecommunications era was never explained, but quickly replaced. Last year a group of physicists at the University of Liege revisited the ancient mystery -- and their solution could change the way we think about the properties of all grainy materials, including powders, sands, cereals and fillings, whose apparently unpredictable properties can stop flows, rupture grain silos, bring sugar factories to a grinding halt and make life difficult for pharmaceutical companies.

*New Scientist*

02 08 2003

1178

## On lies

While acknowledging that the virtue of truth-telling is not absolute, Margaret Simons asks whether the erosion of credibility will count against politicians over time. “Lying is about power... Liars take power away from others in order to hang on to it themselves. When a wife lies to her husband about an affair, she is, because of their close relationship, depriving him of knowledge about his own life... depriving him of the power to make meaningful choices. Democracy rests on the assumption of a close relationship between politicians and the people. They are meant to be our representatives. When a politician lies to us, we are being deprived of the power that comes from having an accurate sense of what is happening in the world and how it relates to us, and of our own part in the tides of world events. The lying politician steals from us both power and responsibility.

*Living Ethics*

Summer 2003

1179