



The Intelligence Revolution

By Russ McGuire - russ.mcguire@gmail.com

Last month I was asked to give the keynote address at the [Nemertes Navigator 360](#) event near Tampa, Florida. The topic of my talk was “The Next Revolution” and I’d like to take the next few months of my column space to talk about what I see coming and how it may impact our churches and ministries. When I talk about the “Next” revolution, I’m talking about the fourth technology revolution in our current information age.

So, what were the first three revolutions?

Arguably, the information age could be said to date to the invention of the telephone in 1876 or the electric telegraph in the 1830s, or even back to Gutenberg’s press in the 1450s. All of these are incredible inventions that radically transformed how we interact with the world around us (especially information) and how businesses operate. However, since this is Christian Computing magazine, I will focus on the information age spawned by the advancement of computer technology.

The first revolution is sometimes called the PC Revolution, or more accurately the Microprocessor Revolution. This focus on the computer itself is understandable. Driven by the exponential improve-

ments in processing power density and cost reflected in Moore’s Law, computers moved from filling a room, to sitting on a desk, to being built into virtually everything with a power supply. However, I think the real revolution was in what those technology advances enabled, so I refer to this first revolution as the Digital Revolution. The truly world-changing transformation that began with the Digital Revolution was the digitization of the world. Prior to this revolution, the real world existed in physical form that we could only perceive with our senses. Through this revolution, the real world was captured as ones and zeros. Music, and images, and videos, and books, and financial transactions, and weather measurements, and vital signs all became data that

could easily be stored, copied, and manipulated.

The second revolution is known as the Internet Revolution, and this is appropriate. While the name Internet describes a vast collection of inter-connected computer networks, the transformational change follows directly from that inter-networking. The Internet revolution made it easy for digital information to cross boundaries. Before broad adoption of the Internet, it was hard to move data from one company to another, or from one family to another. Companies could pay for proprietary Electronic Data Interchange network connectivity and work through complex implementation plans to connect with other companies, and individuals could copy up to 1.4MB onto a floppy disk and carry it to their neighbor (sneaker-net), but virtually overnight, the Internet made it easy for data to flow. Now, it was not only easy for the real world to be digitized, stored, copied, and manipulated, but also transported and shared. The launch of Napster in 1999, and it's rapid growth in popularity, sent a wake up call to all industries that the world had changed.

Some people see the mobile and social revolutions as distinct. I see them as one integral Mobile/Social Revolution. Neither could have had as significant of an impact without the other. This revolution enabled all people, things, and content to be connected all the time and everywhere. Consider the impact that the combination of the smartphone and social networks like Facebook has had on photography. We take pictures we never would've taken before. We enjoy our own pictures in new ways, rarely printing them. We also share our photos differently, no longer laboring to put them in



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a physical photo album. Finally, our friends have a much better experience enjoying the photos we share because they control how they view them and they can join in a dialog about the pictures in real time with far flung friends around the world. In the same way, as wireless connectivity gets integrated into virtually every product with a power supply, the ways in which we interact with those products and with each other will continue to be transformed.

What impact have these revolutions had on the church?

Each of these revolutions have significantly impacted the church. As the Digital Revolution rolled onto our desktops, our churches learned to become more efficient, digitizing the people, relationships, ministries, and transactions that organically defined each local body of believers. The entire church management software industry was born. Bible software started to appear, so pastors and lay people could more thoroughly and efficiently search the Word. And of course, this publication itself was on the forefront preceding all of these advances. The Internet Revolution brought church websites, Sermon Audio, and Bible Gateway, amongst other advances. In the

Mobile/Social Revolution, iPads and Facebook have transformed how we interact with the Bible and other content, and how we interact with each other in Christian community. The YouVersion Bible App has been installed nearly 150 million times on smartphones and tablets. Church Management solutions have gone mobile and social, engaging the congregation.

In general, I'd say that churches tend to move a little slower in

adopting technology, although some churches are always on the leading edge, but clearly each of these revolutions has advanced our ability to know God and to serve Him, wherever we go. Obviously each of these revolutions has also brought new "dangers" into the church and into our congregations. The duty of the church is to determine how best to capture the power of the technology while managing the danger and limiting its negative impact on the church and our people. As we consider the next revolution, I believe this will be particularly challenging.

What is the next revolution?

I refer to the next revolution as the Intelligence Revolution. It incorporates buzzworthy elements such as cloud computing and big data analytics to enable organizations to better serve their constituents. We will begin to explore this next revolution in next month's column.

It is my hope and prayer that these articles will encourage you in your daily walk with Christ. As 1 Peter 4:10 teaches us "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."

Russ McGuire is an executive for a Fortune 100 company and the founder/co-founder of three technology start-ups. His latest entrepreneurial venture is CXfriends (<https://cxfriends.com>), a social network for Christian families.

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