

Strategic Foresight Projects & Publications

By Alex Burns (alex@disinfo.com). December 2002.

Introduction

I sometimes receive queries from readers about the key projects and publications that I've worked on. The following is a brief list of conferences and publications I've been involved with that have featured a [Strategic Foresight](#) role. Strategic Foresight™ is a registered trademark of the [Australian Foresight Institute](#) and terms like Strategic Scanning reflect proprietary techniques. The material outlined here reflects personal applications only. Some foresight applications were embedded into journalist and editorial functions.

This list mentions some of the foresight techniques used and publicly available material whilst respecting any pre-existing commercial confidentiality agreements. I have done undergraduate studies ([La Trobe University](#)) and professional certification, and am currently undertaking postgraduate level work ([Swinburne University](#)) in key issues and methodologies. I am available to consult with corporate and government clients and work with community and non-government groups on a variety of foresight projects.

Foresight Projects & Publications

- [Straight Out of Brisbane](#) conference (November 2002). Co-presentation with Australian futures researcher Mitchell Porter on 'Conspiracies and Futures': a discussion of why Critical Futures offered different solutions to post-9/11 conspiracy theories and if Strategic Foresight capabilities could have pre-empted the terrorist attacks.
- [Australian Foresight Institute](#) postgraduate studies (2002—Present). AFI foresight essays included studies of the [Long-Term Capital Management](#) hedge fund, the [World Risk Society](#), [Strategic Anticipation](#), the [Spiral Dynamics®](#) and [Film Scanning](#) methodology, [Rupert Murdoch](#), the dotcom [speculative bubble](#), macrohistory in [computer gaming](#) simulations, and [Futures Studies](#) as both art and science. Two example PowerPoint presentations are available on [Film Scanning](#) and [Holonc Editing](#).
- [Black Box Magazine](#) (2002—Present). Executive editorial for '[If I Had Known . . .](#)' magazine (January 2003 launch). 'Wild Card' and 'Cross-Impact' analyses of relevant trends during article planning. Visioning, Backcasting and Normative Scenarios during editorial discussions. Planned for 'emerging issues' analysis of key magazine themes.
- [Health Staff Australia](#) (2002—Present). Strategic Scanning of daily health news and mapping of Strategic Actors in bioinformatics, genomics and health industries.
- [Melbourne Social Forum](#) (2002). Co-facilitated 'Anticipatory Global Democracy' workshop with AFI student Jose Ramos using Robert Jungk's 'Future Workshops' technique.

- [This Is Not Art](#) (1999—Present). Chaired, co-chaired and facilitated discussion panels, sessions and workshops on: [Film Scanning](#) methodology, the use of Strategic Foresight and [Causal Layered Analysis](#) in journalism, environmental scanning and dissent sources, and Australian political values (2002); digital issues on the global village and mental health, and American cyber-critic [Mark Dery](#) (2001); ‘perceptual engineering’, dystopian themes in speculative fiction, the spectre of technocracy, *X-Files* era conspiracy subcultures, [Erik Davis](#) and [Feral House](#) publisher [Adam Parfrey](#) (2000); on-line publishing case studies, the new science of [memetics](#), and a facilitating a special three-hour presentation by author [Howard Bloom](#) (1999). Discussion with [Octapod](#) staff about organizational challenges using [Adizes Institute](#) lifecycle model. Facilitated access to ‘thought leaders’.
- [Integral Institute](#) (2001). Co-founding member of the Integral Politics division.
- [Millennium Youth Conference](#) (2001). Co-presented sessions on censorship, online journalism and cyberculture. Facilitated sessions on digital literacy/online universities and how the ‘[digital divide](#)’ in rural communities affects youth culture. Use of Visioning, Backcasting and Normative Scenarios with participants.
- [Spiral Dynamics®](#) certification (2000—Present). Invited to co-present SD II sessions (Melbourne) on geopolitics in 2000 and 2001. Presented a three-hour session on [Film Scanning](#) with 60 selected DVD clips in 2002. Presented a session on the new science of memetics in 2000, 2001 and 2002. Discussions during certification training of action research, scenarios and other organizational change techniques. Researched and wrote [Expanded Bibliography](#) (2001). My presentation by phone to the U.S.-based SD Confab (2000) critiqued some ‘age-cohort’ and trends forecasts of Generation X and [Millennials](#) (post-1982) youth cultures. ‘[The Advertising Virus](#)’ was *Marketing Magazine*’s cover-story (November 1997). Research into collaborative networks including the [Adizes Institute](#) and [Arlington Institute](#).
- [Disinformation®](#) (1999—Present). Daily strategic scanning of global news flows. Mapping of strategic actors in conspiracy and underground subcultures (begun December 1999). Edited, researched and wrote 200+ articles, interviews and roundtables (many on Critical Futures theorists and ‘emerging issues’). ‘Wild Cards’ and ‘Cross-Impact’ analyses of ‘emerging issues’. Proto-Delphi Technique used for roundtables. Visioning, Backcasting and Scenarios in editorial discussions and organizational development projects. Environmental scanning using [Spiral Dynamics®](#) and other scanning frames in the [Vital Signs Monitor](#) and [Disinfo Glossary](#) projects. Business Intelligence monitoring of competing sites and crisis management of potential threats. Research into [Information Visualization](#) capabilities and other tools. Strategic marketing for Disinformation Books projects and daily newsletter. Data-mining and pattern recognition using Web site statistics and user forums.
- [International Paleopsychology Project](#) (1999—Present). Involvement in e-mail discussion list created by founder [Howard Bloom](#). Discussion of philosophy of science, ‘emerging issues’ and geopolitical flashpoints, and the paleopsychological roots of foresight in the brain’s epigenetic evolution (Professor [Richard Slaughter](#)’s ‘level one’ of ‘human capacities and perceptions’). Facilitated discussions which influenced the [Global Uprising](#) site. A ‘cutting edge’ scientific research network.

- **[21•C Magazine](#)** (1996—1998). Contributing editor and writer. Published articles included [Weird Science](#), [Will Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?](#) roundtable and [The Tight Stuff](#). [Forward The Foundation](#) had been edited and laid out for a never-published final issue, and [Moravec's Dangerous Idea](#) was being researched. Involved in brainstorming story ideas for 21•C Books imprint and magazine, strategic branding discussions and SWOT analyses against inter-firm competition. Positioning paper reached 'scenario logics' stage of [Global Business Network](#) Scenarios methodology (influenced by Adrian Slywotzky's work on [Strategic Anticipation](#) and Andy Groves' writings on 'strategic inflection points') before Gordon & Breach publishers ended the publication. Discussions throughout 1998—2001 about possible magazine re-launch, further projects and [21CMagazine.com](#) site.
- **[Temple of Set, Inc](#)** (1996—1998). Two year study between 1994 and 1996 of [TS reading list](#) (1989 edition) including sections on Futures Studies, Platonic philosophy, political science, macrohistory, artificial intelligence, civilizational history, sociology and negotiation. Researched and co-wrote presentations in 1996-97 about Internet trends, Knowledge Management, cyberculture and strategic marketing that prompted an organization-wide Intranet to be established. Discussion of [World Futures Society](#), [Club of Rome](#) and [Living Universe Foundation](#) as futures institutions. Other projects included a 250 book interdisciplinary literature review; organizational development discussions with mentors; selected articles including the [vampire](#) as phenomenological archetype; action research into [Gurdjieff Work](#) and Sufi offshoots, Aghori Hinduism, religious [Satanism](#) and antinomian traditions; and philosophical meditations on the 'global problematique'. 1998 [seminar presentation](#) on the new science of memetics. The [background](#) of a TS cofounder influenced my interest in business intelligence and geopolitics. Future release of archival material is planned.
- **[REvelation Magazine](#)** (1994—1997). Published articles included interviews with [J.G. Ballard](#), [Noam Chomsky](#) and [Robert Anton Wilson](#). An interview with ethnobotanist [Terence McKenna](#) about foresight and virtual reality was published only as an excerpt before the magazine suddenly morphed into a film festival. A lengthy article about musician [Robert Fripp](#) and his foresight experiences in the music industry was researched and written but never published.
- **[Rabelais](#)** (1994). Researched and wrote articles, interviews and reviews for La Trobe University student newspaper. Negotiated interviews and liaised with Australian, U.S. and U.K. companies (also developed client database). Early involvement in Visioning exercises. Researched and co-wrote 1994 university 'Open Day' supplement (which included access to past editors and administrative archives). As the year progressed the editorial team faced the organizational problems explored by Barry Oshry's [Power Lab](#). Ran as candidate in student elections on a losing ticket. The successful new team then created a now-notorious [failure](#) in pragmatic foresight.