Emergent Futures

What's Emerging October 2007

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Welcome to the October edition of What's Emerging.

This month we have our usual eclectic array of links but renewable energy seems to be an emerging theme here combined with Paul's recent presentation to the Auswind Conference. We hope you enjoy this edition.

Cheers

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Business Tips

Slideshare
Slideshare is sort of like YouTube for PowerPoint presentations. A great site if you are looking for business conference presentations or images to use for your own presentations. You just have to sort through the rubbish.

Press Display
Press display gives you access to over 500 newspapers and magazines published world wide and you can customise your access to suit your needs. Very useful if you are looking for information on a regular basis for countries you are dealing with in business.

What's Emerging

Sunny outlook for solar
Solar power has long been the Mercedes-Benz of the renewable energy industry: sleek, quiet, low-maintenance. The outlook for solar, though, is getting much brighter. A few dozen companies say advances in technology will let them halve the price of solar-panel installations in as little as three years. By 2014, solar-system prices will be competitive with conventional electricity when energy savings are figured in, Deutsche Bank (DB) says. And that's without government incentives.

Fading superpower?
In Washington these days, people talk a lot about the collapse of the bipartisan foreign policy consensus that existed during the Cold War. But however bitter today's disputes are about Iraq or the prosecution of the so-called global war on terrorism, there is one bedrock assumption about foreign policy that remains truly bipartisan: The United States will remain the sole superpower, and the guarantor of international security and global trade, for the foreseeable future. This article examines this assumption from a historical perspective.

Gene tests for best way to quit smoking

The agony of quitting smoking is all too familiar: a repeated cycle of determination and then dwindling resolve, peppered with trials of nicotine gum, patches, and even medication. Some people find success with drugs, such as bupropion (trade name Zyban), an antidepressant commonly prescribed for smoking cessation. New research suggests that genetic testing could quickly distinguish which smokers would benefit from bupropion.

Innovative energy response

Waterwerkz beverage vending uses pouches to mix drinks in situ - offering freshly made drinks for consumers and vastly reduced restocking and maintenance for machine owners and operators. The design results in decreased stocking, storage and transportation costs associated with vending machines and the system boasts the lowest ?food mile? rating of any vended packaged cold drink. Moreover, just-in-time flash chilling reduces energy consumption by as much as 80% compared to what's required to refrigerate beverages in traditional vending machines (from www. springwise.com).

Helping carry the load

Researchers at MIT have developed a leg exoskeleton capable of carrying an 80-pound load without the use of motors. According to its developers, the prototype can support 80 percent of this weight while using less than one-thousandth of a percent of the power used by its motorized equivalents.

Computer system defenses modeled on immune systems

The future of security may involve making computer systems behave more like biological systems.

Will computers keep people as pets?

By 2030, or by 2050 at the latest, will a super-smart artificial intelligence decide to keep humans around as pets? Will it instead choose to turn the entire Earth, including the messy organic bits like us, into computronium? Or is there a third alternative? These are questions being asked by people who believe in the Singularity ? read on?

Office in cyberspace

Imagine a work world with no commute, no corporate headquarters and perhaps not even an office in the physical world at all. For Bob Flavin, a computer scientist at IBM; Janet Hoffman, an executive at a management consulting firm; and Joseph Jaffe, a marketing entrepreneur, the future is already here.

Study ties sprawl to climate change

Suburban sprawl is an often-overlooked cause of climate change, a group of urban planning researchers warned in a report that global warming can be slowed only by changing development patterns to reduce the need for Americans to get behind the wheel. Living in more compact, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods actually would do more to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide than driving a hybrid car while staying in a typically spread-out suburb.

WHO warns of global epidemic risk

With about 2.1 billion airline passengers flying each year, there is a high risk of another major epidemic such as AIDS, SARS or Ebola fever. The WHO urges increased efforts to combat disease outbreaks and sharing of virus data to help develop vaccines. Without this, it says, there could be devastating impacts on the global economy and international security. In the report, A Safer Future, the WHO says new diseases are emerging at the "historically unprecedented" rate of one per year.

Ease of eavesdropping

The FBI has quietly built a sophisticated, point-and-click surveillance system that performs instant wiretaps on almost any communications device, according to nearly a thousand pages of restricted documents newly released under the Freedom of Information Act.

Race to carbon neutral

Copenhagen is aiming for carbon neutrality by 2025, upping the ante on Stockholm?s goal of 2050. Ones to watch for ideas and innovations for reducing emissions.

What We Are Writing About

Wind Energy Presentation

Paul's presentation to the Auswind Conference - Future Vision 2020, in Melbourne 9 October, on the future competitive advantage for wind energy can be downloaded from our website:

[Wind Energy's Future Competitive Advantage](#) (2.2MB)

Book Reviews

Two book reviews this month and one of them is a novel. Futurists can learn much by exploring the world of science fiction and thinking through the possibilities and theories presented in them.

[Spook Country by William Gibson](#)

Acclaimed science fiction writer William Gibson (the author of Neuromancer) once famously said " the Future is already here, it is just unevenly distributed". Gibson's novels are generally set well into the future but Spook Country is set in the present and is more of a mystery novel. However, it is clearly written in the same style as his future novels which makes the story and the characters complex and the reading quite difficult unless you are fan. If you can get past this obstacle then the novel is both a story but also a rich discussion of where the digital world is taking us and some very interesting philosophical frameworks that underpin those possibilities. The book requires two readings to fully understand it and if you have not read Gibson's work before we would recommend that you read Neuromancer before you move to Spook Country. We believe the effort is well worth it if you are interested in the genre.

[The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11 by Lawrence Wright](#)

The influence of terrorism on the modern world and the thinking of policy makers and politicians make it incumbent for anybody who wants to think about or make a contribution to the directions we should take to understand the basis for the modern terrorism movement. Lawrence Wright presents an excellent summary of the antecedents of Al-Qaeda and the history of the Bin Laden family in an easily readable style that is more like a novel. Wright describes a lot of detail in clear and simple language and weaves together commentary on Islam with the individual stories of the families of the key members of Al-Qaeda. We strongly recommend the book for anybody that is interested in understanding what is really going on rather than the slogans promoted by politicians.