

Digital Revolution Alert

Issue 48 - May 10, 2002

Resources to help you understand the digital future

*This email alert is offered to you by the **Communications Dept.** of Belgacom to help you understand the growing impact of the internet on our economy.*

For more information, suggestions and comments please contact the editor michel.bauwens@belgacom.be. Pointers to resources are very welcome and you will be credited if you wish so.

The content therein does not in any way reflect the official positions of Belgacom, only the selections and interpretations of the editor, based on published sources.

Special thanks to our regular contributors in terms of suggestions such as Tanguy Delestre, WapWednesday, Hans Arents, knowledge manager of all things digital; Philippe Vandebroeck (Whole Systems), John Dermaut (Belgacom), John Peterson of the Arlington Institute's FuturEdition.

PLEASE NOTE that all links are checked by the editor before sending out the bulletin
If you have problems directly clicking through from the Word document, simply copy and paste the URL directly to your browser.

If you're interested in our companion newsletter about the networked aspects of Ground Zero, please request a sample copy.

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DIGITAL LIFESTYLES

STATISTICS on Digital Teens : *“It turns out that school homework is the main force driving teens to the Internet, followed by E-mail and communicating with friends. An overwhelming 94% of teens surveyed say technology has had a positive impact on their lives, while 90% say it has had a positive impact on the world. 9% plans an IT career”*

Source: Ropenop Technology Mkids Study, 2/2002, <http://www.informationweek.com/story/IWK20020321S0026> ; see also the French report about “European Teenagers Online”, at http://www.netvalue.fr/fr/presse/index_frame.htm?fichier=cp0081.htm

- In the continuing war for digital rights, geeks are organising
<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/gate/archive/2002/04/22/geekp.DTL>

This article highlights a recent initiative that has the Open Source and related movements finally organising themselves for political lobbying, although ineptly, writes the author of this article.

“The group’s organizing manifesto has been posted online for public comment. Its opening pages masterfully detail the interrelated technical and business issues that are helping to hobble the high-tech economy.

Ticking them off one by one, it lists the top 13 obstacles facing the high-tech community, and explains how in each area, narrow corporate interests are using the federal government to erect roadblocks that are slowing down the pace of innovation and economic growth. The primary goal of all these efforts, they note, is to preserve the profit streams of a handful of big media companies, even if it means stopping technological progress dead in its tracks. “

The program is outlined here: <http://www.thelinuxshow.com/otc.htm>

- Political action in the information age: the Dutch case
<http://www.politiek-digitaal.nl/nieuwedemocratie/>

Who are the political actors that will lead the transition to the information age?

This Dutch site monitors contemporary politics with that point of view, and look at eGovernment and new forms of e-enhanced democracy as well.

More info: <http://www.e-poll-project.net> ; French experiments, <http://www.journaledunet.com/0203/020325vote.shtml> ; <http://interactif.lemonde.fr/article/0,5611,2849-274776-0,FF.html>

- Genetic ‘tissue engineering’ as art
<http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,52052,00.html>

It is a truism that artists are always grappling ahead of us with the implications of technological and cognitive advances. These artists featured here are making ‘living sculptures’ where rat tissue is used to make pig wings.

Art for the digitally dispossessed, a French project, at <http://interactif.lemonde.fr/article/0,5611,2850-274705-0,FF.html>

QUOTE: Libraries are becoming a battleground for peace and quiet, now that newcomers use them to surf and chat on their mobile phones.

"And some regulars are fighting back. Johnny Lew, a 31-year-old grad student in nineteenth-century American travel literature, practically got in a fistfight after shushing someone who was chatting about apartment listings. "I didn't want to succumb to that stereotype that I'm just a geek so I'm gonna back down," he says. "I told him, 'I can't concentrate.' And he told me I should get a blood transfusion to get out all my hate. Then I really couldn't concentrate. So I said, 'Do you have a problem with me?' And he said, 'Yeah.' And I said, 'Well, what do you want to do about it?' He stood up: 'What do I want to do about it? What do you want to do about it?' I just glared and said, 'What do I want to do? I just want to read!' "

(source: http://www.newyorkmag.com/page.cfm?page_id=5998)

BUSINESS/GOVERNMENT TRENDS

e-Gov REPORT: Administration électronique et protection des données personnelles : Livre blanc. Pierre TRUCHE, Jean-Paul FAUGERE, Patrice FLICHY . Paris;Ministère de la fonction publique;février 2002;129 pages;30cm

- The old 'new economy' vs. 'the new' new economy
<http://www.thenewrepublic.com/doc.mhtml?i=20020520&s=scheiber052002>

Starting with the analysis of the current subdued economic recovery, characterized by some troubling paradoxes, the article summarises how the 'new new economy' rules (stripped from the internet hype of the 'old new economy') has affected the current and future situation. The article then contrasts this interpretation with the pessimistic views of Morgan Stanley's Steve Roach (often cited in the past in this newsletter). The so-called 'stubborn realists' of the Roach school do not necessarily deny the changes summarised in the two paragraphs of citations below, but say they cannot alter the underlying trends.

"To the extent anyone has a theory about why the economy is recovering so fast after such a mild and short recession (apparently less than one year in duration and with only a single quarter of negative GDP growth), it revolves around increased flexibility. The idea--call it the "new new economy thesis" (the old new economy thesis having been based more on Internet hype than on any analytical foundation)--is that, thanks to recent technological and financial developments, it's now possible for companies to adjust to recession-causing imbalances faster and less painfully than ever before. Among others, this thesis has won support from Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, who cited "flexibility" and "resilience" when talking up "the recuperative powers of the U.S. economy" in his February 27 testimony before Congress.

*As laid out in great detail in a March 4 Wall Street Journal article, **these changes have occurred primarily in two areas. First, innovations in information technology--such as supply-chain management software--have enabled manufacturers to slow production in response to a drop-off in demand more quickly than in the past. According to the Journal, inventories topped out at an average of 44 days' worth of shipments last year, compared with 53 days' worth during the 1990-1991 recession. Because one of the chief determinants of the length of a downturn is the amount of time it takes businesses to liquidate their inventories, the argument goes, this shortened the recession considerably.***

Second, innovations in financial instruments helped limit the pain inflicted while these adjustments were taking place—specifically by propping up consumption. For example, auto manufacturers were able to offer zero-percent financing deals because investors have increasingly bought up bundles of auto loans as securities: The Journal reports that 32 percent of auto loans and leases were "securitized" last year compared with only 15 percent in 1990. (Had the markets not been willing to finance these loans, credit-strapped automakers would have found it impossible to finance the deals on their own, which would have led to a huge drop-off in car sales.) Ditto for the housing market. Banks leery of hanging on to mortgages themselves could simply bundle them together and sell them to investors. This made it easy for people to refinance their homes, cash out their equity, and keep right on spending."

More on the fallout and long-term prospects of the ebusiness revolution in the special issue of Business Week at http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/02_19/b3782601.htm , which mentions the books cited here below. To the question, has the internet revolution really stalled, it counterposes the following data:

"The latest data, in fact, show continued growth, even after dot-com shares started to crash in April, 2000. The number of Internet users worldwide is still rising--by 48% in 2000 and 27% in 2001, to more than 500 million people today, according to researcher IDC. And even as venture funding of Net companies fell 71% last year, IDC says Internet trade between businesses rose 73%, to \$496 billion, and online retail spending rose 56%, to \$112 billion, in the worst retail year in a decade."

Book 1 : James A. Champy, *X-Engineering the Corporation: Reinventing Your Business in the Digital Age*

Book 2: Carlota Perez, *Technological Revolutions and Financial Capital: The Dynamics of Bubbles and Golden Ages*

Book 3: Chris Freeman, *As Time Goes By: From the Industrial Revolutions to the Information Revolution*

- Why paper will perdure

http://www.gladwell.com/2002/2002_03_25_a_paper.htm

Everyone knows that despite the digitalisation of workflows and business processes, paper use has increased rather than decreased. But why is this so? Because paper remains a far superior technology, explains author Malcolm Gladwell.

- Beyond disruptive advertising: what now?

<http://www.fastcompany.com/feature/02/coots.html>

Traditional branding and advertising may well be dead, now that disruptive advertising is on its way out, says branding expert Laura Coots in her new book. What comes next?

"Disruptive advertising is on the way out. And replacing the one-way conversation of pop-up ads and radio spots will be a marketing dialogue between brands and consumers that crosses every channel and grows over time.

"Consumers have all the power now, and they want more from a brand relationship: Consumers only allow a small repertoire of brands into their lives, and they want the relationships with those brands to be meaningful. The stakes are a lot higher for marketers now."

*Still, most marketers don't get it. They "cling to practices designed for an outdated scenario," Coots writes in *Beyond Disruption*, arguing that most tools of measurement and acquisition "revolve almost solely around today's volume moved and not tomorrow's value created." Branding is not about*

communicating a message; it's about engaging in a relationship. And that isn't easy, especially in a marketplace dominated by distrust, anxiety, and scandal."

More at <http://www.fastcompany.com/feature/02/brandaq.html>

Book: Laura Coats et al. *Beyond Disruption: Changing the Rules In the Marketplace* (John Wiley & Sons, 2002).

- Highly Reliable Organisations

<http://www.fastcompany.com/online/58/chalktalk.html>

"Karl E. Weick, the smartest business thinker you've never heard of. A private, academic noncelebrity who labors at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Weick is revered by such public celebrities as Jim Collins and Tom Peters. And his work -- notably, the opaque but groundbreaking 1969 book, The Social Psychology of Organizing -- is among the most cited in the sphere of organizational theory.

As an organizational psychologist, Weick has studied the inner workings of everything from firefighting crews to jazz combos. In his latest book, Weick and co-author Kathleen Sutcliffe (also from the University of Michigan) assess what's called "high-reliability organizations"

Book: *Managing the Unexpected: Assuring High Performance in an Age of Complexity*. By Karl E. Weick et al. (Jossey-Bass, 2001)

- The Update File

- Worldwide internet solutions adoption by companies: survey

URL = http://www.tnsfres.com/industryexpertise/it/e-solutions_adoption.pdf

- Sony authorises open software adaptation of Aibo, by releasing its own open source code kit

URL = <http://www.newscientist.com/news/news.jsp?id=ns99992262>

- Resources

- New ways of flexible working are documented in this specialised magazine

URL = <http://www.flexibility.co.uk/>

- Empowering ethical consumers

This site lets you define your own 'ideals' and then select the companies that also adhere and practice them

URL = <http://www.idealswork.com>.

REPORT : The Agile Workplace. By Michael Joroff, a senior lecturer at MIT's School of Architecture and Planning, and Michael Bell, a vice president at Gartner Research.

150-page report on the workplace industry and how it will have changed our work habits within five years.

Source: <http://www.boston.com/globe/weblog/dcdenison/busintel/042102.html>

TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

- How the HyperNet will change business

http://www.digital4sight.com/loader.php?load_file=nature_of_the_hypernet1_i.htm

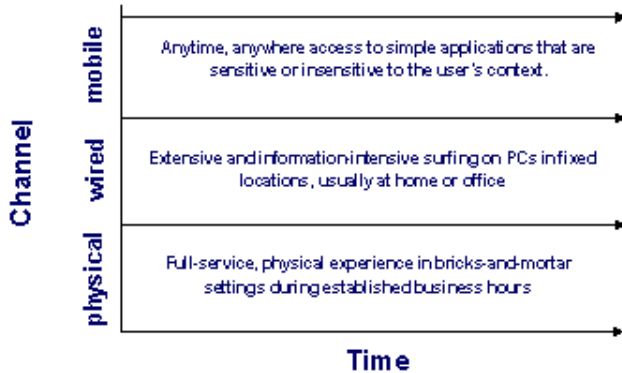
Rarely does an article come along that summarises a wide variety of technological trend into a wider and more integrated vision. This vision is the HyperNet, and defined as the next stage of the internet where mobility, broadband, pervasive computing come together. In the second part, the author explains how this will affect businesses and lead to a profound reorganisation of processes. **I recommend almost all of the reports of the digital4sight site**, they are especially useful for those who want to understand the specific ways in which internet use differs across platforms, i.e. for example the mobile internet is not the PC internet.

“Summary of conclusions:

- *The Hypernet will force a new round of business process reengineering that will squeeze even more operational slack out of organizations*
- *Colonization of the firm by mobile devices, starting at the executive level, will redefine the standard means of connecting to the IT infrastructure (away from the PC, in favor of wireless PDAs etc.), and re-shape the way middle-management work is performed*
- *Ordinary people are embracing Hypernet technology faster than firms can create commercial applications for it. How people use technology, particularly in unexpected ways, will define how firms will exploit it for m-commerce. “*

The important second part on business processes is here, at http://www.digital4sight.com/loader.php?load_file=nature_of_hypernet_2_1.html ; See also the very interesting companion article on the right approach to wireless customer service, at http://www.digital4sight.com/loader.php?load_file=trans_design.htm

THE RIGHT WAY TO APPROACH WIRELESS:



- Affective computing

http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/la-000032322may07_story

The article starts by describing a computer program that can determine the hidden emotions by analysing our facial expressions. This ability will be used to eventually create robots that have emotional skills as well.

“Affective computing would transform machines from slaves chained to the limits of logic into thoughtful, observant collaborators. Such devices may never replicate human emotional experience.

*But if their developers are correct, even modest emotional talents would change machines from data-crunching savants into perceptive actors in human society. **At stake are multibillion-dollar markets for electronic tutors, robots, advisors and even psychotherapy assistants**”*

- The Update File

- very technical, but on an important topic: how to develop Trust Metrics to measure who's trustworthy in electronic environments

URL = <http://www.advogato.org/trust-metric.html>

- experiment in interactive films on the web, where users can alter the content

URL = <http://www.vi-click.com>

- customised browsers with peer to peer facilities

Interesting project that allows companies, individuals, but mostly communities to create their own dedicated browser, with community resources more easily accessible.

URL = <http://www.navigateurinternet.com/>

- Resources

- Reference site on embedded software and hardware that allows non-PC devices to talk to each other

URL = <http://www.embedded.com/>

TELCO/ISP/TV/CONTENT TRENDS

FACT: “A continuing bandwidth glut on long-haul telecommunications networks continues to erode revenues at large telecoms, pushing down prices by 70% a year for the past three years, according to research by Telegeography released Tuesday.... The study found that more than 6.5 terabits of lit capacity crosses fiber-optic networks in London — four times more than the combined bandwidth requirements of the forty largest cities in Europe.”

(source: <http://www.usatoday.com/life/cyber/tech/2002/04/22/bandwith-glut.htm>)

- Broadband deployment: a political priority
<http://europemedia.net/showfeature.asp?ArticleID=9940>

This article makes a very strong argument, but unfortunately brings (to my mind, not enough) little element of proof, that broadband is not just a technical issue, but the very condition of a profound economic revolution that would bring substantial benefits. Worth reading nevertheless.

“This slow, dull, inferior internet gave us productivity growth of 3.07 per cent a year, for seven years. Does that mean a faster internet could give us more productivity? Yes.

Does that mean a faster internet could keep prices permanently falling, inflation under control, interest rates low, and create more jobs worldwide? Yes.

Does that mean a faster internet would generate more taxable income to invest in health, education and public services, eliminate income tax rises, connect the world far more and breakdown differences? Yes.

A faster internet, or broadband, is what the world needs everywhere. Not just ADSL, but beyond that into SDSL, VDSL, and [wireless](#) broadband also.

[VDSL](#) costs about \$2bn (E2.3bn) to upgrade every 50m citizens, so we are looking at the equivalent investment of what we saw between 1995 and 2002 to achieve a sizeable gain.

We live in a \$30trn (E34trn) world economy, of which one-third is in the US, one-third in Europe and one-third scattered across the rest of the world.

Based on the productivity numbers we saw earlier, a global VDSL network at a cost of \$250bn (E284bn) would likely double the global economy to \$60trn (E68trn) over 30 years. This would provide the wealth to feed the whole world with real jobs, not just a bit of food, some loans and promises.”

- Paying with your mobile phone (case study)

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/sci/tech/newsid_1965000/1965992.stm

The future is coming closer, witness this large scale 'pay-with-your-mobile-phone Paybox pilot project in the West End of London.

- Corporate TV Channels over the intranet: a growth market

<http://europemedia.net/showfeature.asp?ArticleID=10396>

Interview outlining the growth potential of this new platform for corporate communications.

And don't forget **streaming video over 3G wireless**: <http://www.newsbytes.com/news/02/176087.html>

- The Update File

- Apparently a craze among American executives, the Blackberry is now going global

URL = <http://www.blackberry.net/>

- Voice over IP is getting a second chance, mainly in the business world, says Business Week

URL = http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/may2002/tc2002051_3643.htm

- Description of 2 'wireless cashless' services by McDonalds and Starbucks, where customers can pre-order and pay through their mobile, using the 'Ontain' service

URL = http://www.mobileinfo.com/News_2001/Issue51/Cashless_Service.htm ;
<http://www.ontain.com>

- Bluegrid has 'wirelessly' (LAN) enabled a shopping mall in Sweden and is undertaking a detailed study of the resulting behaviour

URL = <http://www.bluegrid.se/streetwise/>

- **The average ARPU for mobile voice services can still be raised**: interview

URL = <http://europemedia.net/showfeature.asp?ArticleID=10407>

- Resources

- Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association

URL = <http://www.wow-com.com/>

- Companies which offer **ad-hoc wireless networks**

Mesh Networks : <http://www.meshnetworks.com> ; Skypilot Network : <http://www.skypilot.com>
Sputnik : <http://www.sputnik.com> ; FHP Wireless : <http://www.fhpwireless.com>
Boingo Wireless : <http://www.boingo.com> ; UltraDevices : <http://www.ultradevices.com>
CoWave Networks : <http://www.cowave.com> ; already commercialised in Japan:
<http://www.miserv.net/miserv/english/>

- Tom Pozar is seen as a '**guerilla networks guru**' and the driving force behind the Bay Area Wireless Group. Here are articles about his activities.

URL = <http://www.lns.com/house/pozar/press.html>; <http://workingwireless.net>

- New Reports

REPORT: Mobinet4.

The fourth market research study about concrete mobile usage and expectations confirms the interest for small cash transactions. And confirms that SMS use is outgrowing the youth population.

URL = <http://www.atkearney.com/main.taf?a=5&b=4&c=1&d=50>

REPORT: Global Mobile Content Study.

What should the EU and governments do to stimulate the growth of a mobile content industry?

URL = http://www.cordis.lu/econtent/studies/stud_mobile.htm

REPORT : Hypermobility and the mobile underclass.

Report entitled '**on the move**' by English consultant "Local Futures", an analysis of the social dynamics around the acceptance and use of mobile communications.

URL = <http://www.localfutures.com/article.asp?aid=41>

Read this Report #1 on the HyperNet: The Hyper-enabled Consumer.

URL = http://www.digital4sight.com/DCAS/published/customer_011112.pdf

Read this Report #2: The HyperNet Revolution and the Telecommunications Industry

URL = http://www.digital4sight.com/DCAS/published/telecom_020107.pdf

BEYOND THE INTERNET

- How our Brain has Changed

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/092011.html>

“Brain scientist and climate researcher Bill Calvin has written a most interesting book combining the archaeological indicators of the development of the human brain with the changes in the external environment that seem to have influenced that development.”
(source: John Petersen’s Arlington Institute.)

From the introduction: *“One of the most shocking scientific realizations of all time has slowly been dawning on us: **the earth’s climate does great flip-flops every few thousand years, and with breathtaking speed.** Many times in the lives of our ancestors, the climate abruptly cooled, just within several years. Worse, there was much less rainfall in many places, together with high winds and severe dust storms. Many forests, already doing poorly from the cool summers, dried up in the ensuing decade. Animal populations crashed—and likely early human populations as well. Lightning strikes surely ignited giant forest fires, denuding large areas even in the tropics, on a far greater scale than seen during an El Niño because of the unusual winds. Sometimes this was only the first step of a descent into a madhouse century of flickering climate.*

Our ancestors lived through hundreds of such episodes—but each became a population bottleneck, one that eliminated most of their relatives. We are the improbable descendants of those who survived—and later thrived.”

More in this interesting interview with Steve Olson, see book 2 as well:
<http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/interviews/int2002-04-26.htm>

- Book 1: A Brain for All Seasons. Human Evolution and Abrupt Climate Change. by William H. Calvin. University of Chicago Press, 2002.

A companion book:

- Book 2: Steve Olson. Mapping Human History: Discovering the Past Through Our Genes

“a story of the last 150,000 years of human history, told through the information emerging from our DNA.”

And another great book, summarising the evolution of consciousness over the ages, based on an overview of scientific research:

- Book 3: Changes of Mind : A Holonomic Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness (Suny Series in the Philosophy of Psychology). by Jenny Wade. State University of New York Press, 1996.

- Cyberspace and Immaterial Spiritual Spaces: how are they related?
<http://www.eyewithwings.net/nechvatal/ideals.htm>

The above link refers to a full-length thesis, entitled, "Introduction to Immersive Ideals/ Critical Distances, comparing virtual reality and 'previous immersive' idioms, written by Joseph Nechvatal, for a Ph.D. at the Centre for Advanced Inquiry in the Interactive Arts (CAiIA). See also the reference guide, "Life in Digital Space: your guide to bots, biota, and virtual pets", with link below. Biota.org is a good reference on these topics as well.

URL = <http://www.digitalspace.com/avatars/book/fullbook/chbi/chbi1.htm>

- Quantifying the 'social return on investment'
<http://www.fastcompany.com/feature/02/haas.html>

The MBA business schools are convinced that we have to measure what we care for, and, with an influx of students that demand attention to the social responsibility of companies, they are developing metrics to do just that.

More 'socially just resources' compiled by Fast Company:
http://www.fastcompany.com/online/resources/socjust_resources.html

- **Humanism vs. posthumanism: Luc Ferry**
<http://www.lemonde.fr/article/0,5987,3230-274890-,00.html>

Philosophically-aware readers probably know that humanism, the dominant philosophy in the West since the Renaissance (and the closest thing we have to a 'post-Christian' spirituality), has been under assault since the 1960's. By European postmodern philosophers on the one hand, and by technologically-inspired and U.S.-dominated transhumanism on the other. On the occasion of his nomination as Minister of Education for the new French government, it is worth rediscovering the work of Luc Ferry, a staunch defender of the humanist tradition. His 1996 classic *l'Homme Dieu*, is still very much worth reading as a staunch defense of the humanist tradition.

Book: Luc Ferry. L'Homme-Dieu ou le sens de la vie (Grasset)

- The Update File
 - Interview on the progress in Genomics (and a whole TV series about it)

URL = <http://www.fastcompany.com/online/38/venter.html>;
<http://www.wardtv.com/sequence1.htm>

- A site experimenting with digital biology

URL = <http://www.biota.org/>

- an ambitious project to create a worldwide cooperative exchange network with a 3D navigation system

URL = <http://www.anyone.net/>

- nanotechnology applications in medicine and war are becoming commonplace

URL = <http://www.newsfactor.com/perl/story/17389.html>

POTPOURRI

- Book of the week: the South vs. (post)modernity

<http://www.kindinclusionplan.org/dimensions/dimensions04/page10.html>

One of the better books to understand the psychological shock of modernity to traditional societies and why it generates ideological pathologies.

« Dariush Shayegan, exilé en France, est souvent présenté comme étant le plus grand philosophe iranien contemporain. Dans Le Regard Mutilé il avance avec force qu'on ne peut comprendre les difficultés et le désarroi du Tiers-monde qu'en prenant toute la mesure des bouleversements psychologiques occasionnés par la modernité occidentale.

« Les idées nouvelles qui m'assaillent, les objets nouveaux que je vois en face de moi, étendus dans toute leur épaisseur, me sont étrangers. »

Book : Dariush Shayegan : Le Regard Mutilé

- Digital Personality of the Week: Ellen Ullman

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/g/a/2002/05/08/eullman.DTL>

Ellen Ullman is a computer programmer who wrote an interesting book-length essay about the interplay of personal life, values, and programming, and is now working on a novel, as well as essays about artificial life. The interview above is well worth reading for her humane insights.

Book: Close to the Machine: Technophilia and its Discontents. By Ellen Ullman.

- Digital Movie of the Week: Matrix, the sequels
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101020513-235417,00.html>

The Matrix, was one of the more extraordinary successes in showing to a wider public the wider issues involved in humanity's quest for transhuman technologies, and what may happen if we would actually succeed. Good news for the fans of this cult movie is that parts two and three are due out this year (in the U.S.: in May and November).

In the meantime, there are some interesting movies in theatres right now: K-Pax, Avalon, both with good reviews, and Impostor, with somewhat less glowing reviews.