

Memo from
JOSHUA LEDERBERG

To: E A Feigenbaum

MAR 25 1973

Electronic equiv. to Travel

Dear Ed,

As I told you, I tried to interest AFOSR in developing and demonstrating this about 10 years ago. My thought was they could easily generate surplus excess capacity in military comsats that while on standby status these could serve the demo. at acceptable rates.

They quite misunderstood what I was driving at and simply quoted the expense of a real video.

John Pierce while at Bell Labs has occasionally commented on this development and its (to be) ekistic (city-planning) implications

The best recourse I know is a series of NAE studies on the "wired city" which deals in part with business automation and communication. And I've run into this stuff of Westrum's.

I urge you to consider a workshop or consultant studies to look at the systems problem from a behavioral science as well as a technical standpoint, in order to set well-founded specifications for the systems you're setting up.

Feigenbaum

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It would also be easy for the most ingenious new systems to be shot down for lack of forethought about their human acceptability.

Some foreseeable problems - new systems are likely to entail capital costs that many organizations cannot easily amortize in their annual budgets, despite long term savings. (This is why MIT resists micro-forms for distributing papers to reviewers)

The phone ~~copy~~ company buffers that problem for via communication - but this approach has obvious implications for monopoly and standardization. (And that it happened is partly a historical accident)

Competition between firms is obviously a good thing; but expensive technology within a firm can stress its functions and status hierarchies - as the computer has already done in some measure

There probably are a number of people in Biz school and in Commons. here worth starting up the working idea with.

Have you ever discussed these issues with Simon? For my part, I do not think the design & its evaluation is so self-evident.

NASA/SPL, by the way, does have an effective if cumbersome document control and retrieval system that obviates thousands of guys who turn over fairly frequently, having to keep massive multiple files. It might be worth your over-viewing how this microform-based system really works.