



MULTIMEDIA KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Multi-media script that I wrote when working with James Burke, creator of the Connections science series on the BBC. This became the basis for the introductory multi-media presentation when he spoke before two thousand technology professionals in Chicago. The left column scripts what is on screen. The right column is Mr. Burke's voiceover narration.

VIDEO

Generic swirling outer space big bang explosion

Cave men -- pan over some public domain still images/paintings. Cave men killing a mastodon (or other cave men) with crude spears.

Medieval-looking lithographs of popes, kings, pomp and circumstance...

...stretch of old-fashioned library shelves...Jefferson Room at Library of Congress

J.P. Morgan, Standard Oil, AT&T, Microsoft

High-tech network -- points of light connecting

NARRATOR

In the beginning, there was the word. That is to say, a discrete chunk of the universe's most valuable commodity: *Information*.

Information in the form of DNA is responsible for turning a soupy, uninteresting ball of dirt into a planet covered with the living expression of DNA information -- life.

A great deal later, information is what separated australopithecines into the haves -- with nice flint weapons -- and the have nots, who used the very lowest of low-tech: unmodified rocks.

A great deal later than that, information monopolies defined and shored up the power of the great, monolithic human institutions: The king and the church.

Compared to the hoards of information stored in the libraries of the great institutions, the power of the individual human being was totally insignificant.

And this situation has more or less continued into the modern era, though the power elites have changed.

But something funny is happening. Information, unlike, say, a basement full of gold coins or a year's supply of wheat, has a tendency to get out of control. Information feeds on itself and grows stronger. The more pieces of information you have, the more they connect to each other, and the more information you get.

VIDEO

The points of light connect faster and faster until the screen whites out and we see another big bang like the one at the beginning.

factories...

Abacus
Charles Babbage engine
Adding machine

Big boxes with vacuum tubes

MINIVAC

WANG

CRAY

Cubicle farm with PCs

Public domain shot of person at home using computer: a domestic scene, e.g. with a cup of coffee, kids, dog or the like

NARRATOR

Given this kind of exponential increase, it's only natural that knowledge tends to bust out of the metaphorical basements in which the power elite prefers to keep it.

Not only is there more information, but the most important thing this living substance does, like any virus, is improve itself through evolution. In this case, evolutionary pressure is applied to the tools that are used to store and manipulate the raw data.

In the century now drawing to a close, the industrial revolution turned its mighty strength from machines that build cars to machines that store and manipulate that essential substance, information. It's a tremendous breakthrough when, after hundreds of years of good scientific theory and practice, not to mention an industrial revolution, the first "thinking machine" is invented. Of course it doesn't exactly think. But it can calculate. These first crude computers take up several rooms and are slower than child learning his times tables.

But from there the story becomes a familiar one. The minivac that is built with government subsidies and would barely fit in this room...

...becomes the mainframe that sits in a corner of the corporate basement and crunches numbers overnight...

...becomes the UNIX box with dumb terminals on every floor...

...becomes the PC that sits on every desk.

And at each stage, what you can see happening is information conquering new ground. It won't be contained. It multiplies, it branches out, it has you doing spreadsheets at home in your pajamas when such pursuits used to be restricted to the accounting department during work hours. Scary? Perhaps. But also, tremendously empowering

VIDEO

Revisit the progression from big crude machines to PC, but faster. Build up framed images into a montage, each overlapping the preceding stage.

... so that right about here, a new image comes in from “behind” the POV and lays on top of the old images:
the SMART CARD

Stream crypto algorithms across screen

Shot of person using a Mr. Payroll or similar visually-appealing biometric use

Images on screen expand and fade into a final white-out starburst

[Then Mr. Burke is steps forward onto stage and is REVEALED. Screen comes up with giant letters: “JAMES BURKE”

Segue into introductory remarks.]

“Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Let me start by saying that you won’t be hearing much more from me specifically about smart cards, biometrics, cryptography, etc. You’re getting that out your ears here at this conference, and you know it all anyway”.

PICKS UP SAME SMART CARD FROM PEDESTAL

“What I’d like to do is put this card and security stuff, and what it means to the average human being, into a context that I hope hasn’t occurred to you before...”

NARRATOR

What has happened is that you now possess the secret stuff, the miracle juice that used to be the private domain of churches, kings, national governments, universities, big corporations. The knowledge that it took centuries of monopolistic power to accumulate can be downloaded onto you hard drive in the time it takes to microwave dinner.

And arguably, it’s the people in this room who are going to take things to the next level. What you here today are proposing to do is take that basement full of information...

...and put it in our pockets.

With information traveling around in our wallets on smart cards...

...protected from the depredations of bad actors, and would-be power elites, with widespread cryptography...

...and with biometrics to make sure that the person carrying that card is really you...

..the empowering of the individual, and the corresponding weakening of the big old info monopolies, is going to take another, very big, step forward.