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 communication 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 4 mc video.

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

The best resource 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 contract studies to look at the system 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 NIH resists microforms for distributing proposals to reviewers)

The phone ~~copy~~ company buffers that problem for voice 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 functional and status hierarchies — as the computer has already done in some measure

There probably are a number of people in Biz school and in Communs. here worth starting up the workshop 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/JPL, 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 overviewing how this microform-based system really works