

Artificial Intelligent Agents

We are in the Information Revolution, but only just starting what could be the biggest and most exciting area of human advancement. The offer of the Information Revolution is instant access to any information in quantities that you have never dreamt of before. In fact, in quantities that is the stuff of your worst nightmares!

What we all need as we journey down the Information Super Highway is help, and help is at hand, in the form of agents – Artificial Intelligent Agents. Just like the secretary, or personal assistant, of days gone by we will use these new agents to sort, sift and pre-digest the mountains of information that will surround us if not completely swamp us in the near future.

Referring to Artificial Intelligent Agents is really a misnomer – these agents are not intelligent, nor are they artificial. They are simply small packages of software that are there to help us. We will be able to programme them (by example – or voice command) and they will ruminate in the vast expanses of the information world seeking and sorting the information that might be useful to us. This information will then be offered to us for executive decision. I do not see these agents making decisions – they are not that smart, well, not in our lifetimes.....

Like all new inventions, everyone is at a loss as to how, or why, they would use such agents. I see them being used in every day situations. For example, I see you using a TV watching agent! Just imagine in 6 years time when there is over 4,000 channels of digital TV streaming into your home! Are you going to read the programme listings? Because they are going to arrive in a book nearly a metre thick – every day! No, you will use an agent. It will watch what you watch, know what you like and dislike, and will seek out programmes and offer them to you. It might even have a conversation with your diary-agent and automatically record those programmes that are transmitted when you are out.

I see you having many agents for Finance, Shopping, Music, etc. each one attending to its area and culling the available information to manageable quantities. But, I hear you say, “What happens when they make mistakes?” Well, did human assistants never make mistakes? I see the biggest mistake being bringing too much information back from the mountain.

So enquiries for information from Call Centres of the future might be by Artificial Intelligent Agents rather than people.....

And these Agents will have faces. If you visited the Dome last year you might have seen in the Talk Zone an Avatar Booth. You stood in the booth and we took 4 photographs of you (front, back and each side). As you stepped out of the booth you became a full motion, full colour virtual actor in an artificial reality space riding ET’s bike over the Dome! As well as

Looking at the Future Slightly Differently

faces and bodies these agents will have voices and be able to listen and understand – see “Talking to me...” last month..... With a little more application the lips can be synchronized to the words being spoken and the whole process becomes very conversational!

The Agents might even have personalities.... HAL the computer from the film 2001 might not be science fiction any more.

I see the initial access to information being by these agents, but once the human takes an interest, I still see the need for human-to-human dialogue and the essence of the Call Centre still remains vibrant and essential. It is just the mundane chores that will be automated leaving the human doing that which the human is best at doing..... applying intellect and negotiating....