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## Notes: The Future of . . .

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*This is a compilation of short notes on several management topics we track on a regular basis: **Technology, Place and Space, People and Organizations, and Work Design.** We welcome your comments and suggestions for other topics and stories you'd like to hear about..*

### The Future of Technology

#### [Harvard Libraries Adapt to the Digital Age](#)

What is the role of a “traditional” library in the digital age? Does it make any sense to continue acquiring and storing bound books and journals when almost everything is now available digitally? And how should libraries “curate” digital documents? What storage and access challenges do they face?

The May-June 2010 issue of *Harvard Magazine* included two very informative and thoughtful articles addressing these questions, both written by Jonathan Shaw:

[“Gutenberg 2.0: Harvard’s Libraries deal with Disruptive Change”](#)

[“Digital Preservation: An Unsolved Problem”](#)

#### [Honda Rethinks the Concept of Personal Mobility](#)

Check out this short video on YouTube; it demonstrates a new personal mobility “vehicle” from Honda that makes the Segway look almost old-fashioned. It’s really fascinating, even it’s practical applications aren’t yet all that clear.

### The Future of Place and Space

#### [Telecommuting at 32,000 Feet](#)

A short but important blog post by Tom Harnish of [“Undress For Success”](#) (a website/blog, as well as a bestselling book by the same name). Tom is reporting on his partner Kate Lister’s recent speech at the annual World at Work conference, “Telecommuting: The Bottom Line” (which she delivered together with the CEO of Alpine Access, a virtual call center company). Just as importantly, however, Tom reports on his experience writing and posting the blog article while on an American Airlines flight to San Diego. Yes, you can now be a “Sky Warrior” as well as a Road Warrior.

## The Future of People and Organizations

### [Want Impact? Networks Trump Organizations](#)

For an unusual but insightful lesson on the power of networks (versus traditional, hierarchical organizations), take a look at [this blog post](#) from Dreams Indeed International, a global non-profit organization focused on supporting social entrepreneurs in third-world areas. This is a story about a young Egyptian with an absolutely audacious dream: to build 400,000 new homes in Egypt in the next 25 years—with no money, no registered business, and no staff.

Yet it sounds plausible, because he's going to use networks of personal relationships to leverage over two million volunteers. You won't regret reading this one.

## The Future of Work Design

### [The Economics of Social Business](#)

This is a very thoughtful article (on the blog "[Every Company is a Media Company](#)," hosted by Tom Foremski, a well-respected chronicler of Silicon Valley news) addressing how social media transforms virtually every business function and fundamentally alters the economics of doing business. Well worth your attention.

### Is Technology Destroying our Economy?

We're not sure if this note belongs here or in the [Future of Technology section](#), but there's a really critical long-term economic issue lurking beneath the surface of the daily news about our struggle to create jobs and get back on a growth path.

Martin Ford, the author of *Lights in The Tunnel*, which [we reviewed in this newsletter in March](#), just sent us a link to a May 12 *New York Times* article, "[In Job Market Shift, Some Workers are Left Behind](#)," that highlights the way this recession is knocking millions of well-qualified people out of the workforce because their jobs can be done more cheaply with technology. *Lights in The Tunnel* is all about the grim prospect that this continuing replacement of jobs with technology could go on for decades, eventually putting just about of us out of work. And what happens then?

Martin also told us that he's made a pdf version of the book available for free downloading from his website, at <http://www.thelightsinthetunnel.com/>. This is a must-read!

### About the Work Design Collaborative and *Future of Work Agenda*

*Future of Work* is a global network of resources – practitioners, thought leaders, researchers, and senior consultants – who are committed to building and implementing physical, social, and technology-based work environments that are cost-effective, socially and environmentally responsible, and personally satisfying.

We are focused on defining the future of work and helping our members and clients achieve new levels of workforce and workplace productivity. *Future of Work* produces and distributes management tools, surveys, benchmark databases, white papers and technical reports, conferences and workshops, newsletters, books and articles, and public presentations on the changing nature of work. The Work Design Collaborative, LLC, provides leadership and infrastructure services for the *Future of Work* community.

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