

## The eve of destruction?

### Government, media should pay more attention to Y2K

About 30 years ago, it was decided millions of dollars should be saved by conserving memory and having every computer read the date in six digits.

For example, January 28, 1999 would be read by every computer as 01/28/99.

Most new computers are simply built upon the older versions and, as a result, the date continues to read this way. At the stroke of midnight Jan. 1, 2000, many computers will simply read 01/01/00 and millions of computers, from cash machines to intercontinental ballistic missiles, may not accurately read the year as 2000. Instead, experts fear the date will be read as January 1, 1900, causing the computers to either fail or miscalculate. This is commonly referred to as the Y2K bug.

The typical family home depends on an enormous amount of computer power, yet the average person knows very little about the real impact this millennium bug could have on America.

Billions of dollars are being spent to solve this problem, but the real scare is the uninformed nationwide panic that could occur prior to the new century. The media has a responsibility to report every implication of Y2K, and more importantly, any progress being made. In addition, the government needs to team up with corporations to find a quick solution and keep the media updated regularly.

Ignorance could very well breed peril for our country.

Because of an overwhelming fear of banks going bankrupt and closing their doors, people withdrew everything from the banks, which helped to plunge America into the Great Depression. With the upcoming excitement of a worldwide computer crash, many people will run to the bank thinking all of their accounts will be lost in the new year.

This is a valid and frightening thought and unless the media provides regular updates, it could become a reality if people everywhere assume nothing is being done.

Distrust in American leaders is very strong right now and there is a great concern government officials will not correct



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this flaw by the year 2000.

Y2K is serious because of its fixed and non-negotiable deadline and the people are aware of this fact.

If the United States takes on the attitude of "each man for himself," the solution will never be reached and mass chaos will be the outcome. If the government does not step in and force everyone to work together to make Y2K a priority, then citizens will take drastic actions to save themselves.

There are hundreds of alarming Websites proclaiming the end of the world is coming and what actions are needed for personal protection.

At the Y2K Survive Website, people who are anxious about the new year have been encouraged to build underground shelters, buy a years supply of food and even purchase generators. Several families hold monthly "Y2K drills", where the power is turned off and they all run to shelter.

The Welcome to My Nightmare Website directs its visitors to several sites that suggest those staying in the city to buy firearms in an effort to protect themselves if a riot breaks out.

In the Jan. 18 issue of Time, Mike McClure discussed his intent to withdraw extra money from the bank, buy extra candles and store water in preparation for the coming millennium.

The scary thing is McClure is in charge of repairing the Y2K problem at Georgia's electric-power giant. Facts such as this do not produce a lot of confidence for the American public.

There is little doubt with a lot of determination, the Y2K bug could become the first successfully met challenge of the 21st Century. But if citizens of the United States are not made aware of new developments and the government does not help unite people in an effort to quickly resolve the issue, then America could face problems before any solution is ever reached. Or even worse, a solution will not be reached in time.

As Time pointed out, the artist formally known as Prince might have been right all along in his song "1999".

"2000 zero zero, Party's over, oops! Out of time!"

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### Do not overlook mankind's important yet smaller feats

The last 2,000 years have stood witness to a large number of humankind's greatest accomplishments. From the printing press to computers, humanity has stumbled, walked and succeeded in areas few people in the B.C.E. could have imagined.

Recently, more than 80 scholars gathered at the Edge (www.edge.org) in an effort to pinpoint the most important invention or development of the millennia. Answers ranged from eyeglasses to erasers to birth control pills.

While many of the suggestions are quite provocative or puzzling, it appears the academics, in the pursuit of trying to appear exceedingly intuitive and intelligent, forgot the more important inventions that Aggies simply could not live without. They are the things Aggies take for granted, but without them, life on this campus would never be the same.

• Sliced bread. It is hard to believe a group of "scholars" left this much important discovery off their list. After all, whenever a new product is introduced today, it is always compared to sliced bread. Plus, without sliced bread, childhood (and collegiate) peanut butter and jelly sandwiches would have been big enough for Godzilla to eat.

• The toilet. When Thomas Crapper put the finishing touches on his contribution to humanity, he probably did not realize what a versatile object he had invented. Besides the obvious uses, the toilet provides much companionship and support to drunken college students, is great for disposing of evidence and serves as a wonderful way for sending goldfish and other small pets on to the great beyond.

• Shopping malls. Where else but a mall can people from different walks of life come together and be miserable? Most males hate being dragged to malls, most females feel miserable after coming out of the dressing room during swimsuit season



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and most teenagers cruising around are filled with angst. However, without the mall's many stores, a large number of college students would be without jobs; or without a place to spend their meager fortunes; and without a Victoria's Secret. What a tragedy that would be.

• Football. What would America be like without Monday Night Football? It is a frightening thought, isn't it? An even worse thought is college without football. How would schools settle rivalries if there were no football games? By putting soap in campus fountains and spray-painting graffiti on the grounds? That would be too juvenile.

What would college students do if they could not spend their Saturdays attending football games and getting drunk afterwards? They might actually start attending cultural events, attend scholarly discussions and perhaps leave college with an enriched experience. But that is too frightening to even consider.

• AggieBucks. True, this is a Texas A&M-related invention, but it makes such an impact on the economy it should not be overlooked. Without AggieBucks, Aggies would have a harder time buying CDs and clothes with their parents' money. More students might actually watch their spending because they would be spending real money, as opposed to AggieBucks. The whole economy of Bryan-College Station might have been in the toilet.

• Pizza. Some may talk about the world's most perfect food, but college students have already discovered it. Whether it is eaten hot or cold, for breakfast or for dinner, pizza is the uberfood of many Aggies' diets. Without it, Aggies might start looking less like Old Roc and more like Kate Moss.

The citizens of this millennia have a lot to be proud of. Humanity has come a long way in a relatively short time, but there is still much more to be discovered. After all, no one has figured out how to get a decent parking spot on campus.

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### Clear, rational thinking a necessity

It is everywhere. On the news, on computer screens and even in commercials. It is time for the new millennium, and society is going crazy.

Unfortunately, all the hype about the new millennium is completely unjustified.

The "sky is falling" philosophy that has invaded the thoughts of many Biblical scholars and a variety of normally "thinking" people is the result of a lot of clever promotional investments (think M&M's candy) and an interpretation of the Bible that leads people to think Jesus is returning in a year.

However, what these people need to remember is, whatever your religion, God does not work on man's schedule. The concept of the millennium is merely a human construct to ensure order out of chaos. Humans created the idea of keeping track of the number of passing years, because it simplified numerous issues, such as crop rotation, child rearing and everyday life. Man would not have flourished without a means of measuring time.

God, however, does not need a way to keep track of time passing. In fact,

although the Bible says the world was created in six days, it is unclear how long a day is in God's time. Therefore, it is a little impractical to assume the human-designed concept of the new millennium means anything at all in Biblical terminology.

Further, even if the coming of the new millennium did mean something, it would not occur until the year 2001. The reason for this is the actual changing of the millennium does not really happen until the year 2001. The reason for the misconception lies in the fact there was no year 0. Mankind's dating system merely flipped over from 1 B.C. to 1 A.D. Therefore mathematically — add 2000 years to 1 A.D. — the change of the millennium occurs in the year 2001.

Although this is actually a fairly simple concept, companies who are making a great deal of money from the amazing amount of promotions are unlikely to mention this fact.

In fact, there are some people who argue the Y2K computer scare is merely a frightening theory that will not actually come to pass. These people claim computer companies are spreading this rumor as a means to ensure greater profits when they come out with a "cure."

Whether or not this is true is a matter of debate that will only be solved when

the computer systems start registering the year 2000 (or 1900, which would result in a hugely complicated mess).

Another problem associated with all the discussion of the millennium is a rise in hate crimes. As a recent event in Israel shows, some people are interpreting the coming of the Messiah as a reason to attack or kill members of other religions. They said their efforts will bring the Messiah sooner or will guarantee the Messiah's coming.

For example, Israeli authorities discovered a plot by a group of Americans to kill many Jewish citizens in hopes of hastening the return of Jesus.

The Americans felt if the blood of Jews was spilled, Jesus would return even sooner than expected. The Americans were quickly deported back to the United States.

The coming of the millennium should be viewed for what it really is: a new year with a different twist. No more ones or nines in the writing of the date — that is all the year 2000 represents and all the meaning it should have.

It could also be a chance to really start working towards a better and more unified world. After all, with all those zero's, it is almost as if humankind has a clean slate.



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