



The following article is from the Xerox quarterly customer magazine BENCHMARK, Fall 1989 issue (page 25).

They Were a Little Off...

Predicting the future is always a risky business, and the following quotes show how often even the experts can go astray:

“Radio has no future.”

--Lord Kelvin (1824-1907), president of the British Royal Society.*

“The ordinary ‘horseless carriage’ is a luxury for the wealthy; it will never, of course, come into as common use as the bicycle.”

--LITERARY DIGEST, in 1889***

“It is an idle dream to imagine that...automobiles will take the place of railways in the long-distance movement of...passengers.”

--American Road Congress, in 1913.*

“Flight by machines heavier than air is unpractical and insignificant, if not utterly impossible.”

--Astronomer Simon Newcomb, in 1902.***

“Space travel is utter bilge.”

--Dr Richard van der Reit Wooley, upon assuming the post of British Astronomer Royal, in 1956.*

“Speaking movies are impossible. When a century has passed, all thought of our so-called speaking movies will have been abandoned. It will never be possible to synchronize the voice with the picture.”

--Film maker D.W. Griffith, in the early 1920s.***

“Who in the hell wants to hear actors talk?”

--Harry Warner, founder of Warner Bros. Studio, in 1927.**

“For God’s sake, go down to reception and get rid of a lunatic who’s down there. He says he’s got a machine on him for seeing by wireless! Watch him—he may have a razor on him.”

--Editor of the Daily Express of London, refusing to see John Baird, the inventor of television, in 1925.**

“I think there is a world market for about five computers.”

--Thomas J. Watson, chairman of IBM, in 1943.**

“There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home.”

--Ken Olsen, president of Digital Equipment Corporation, in 1977.**

*Quotes courtesy of Sallie Baliunas.

**As quoted in THRIVING ON CHAOS, by Tom Peters.

***As quoted in QUEST MAGAZINE, January/February 1981.