

Looking to the future with scenarios

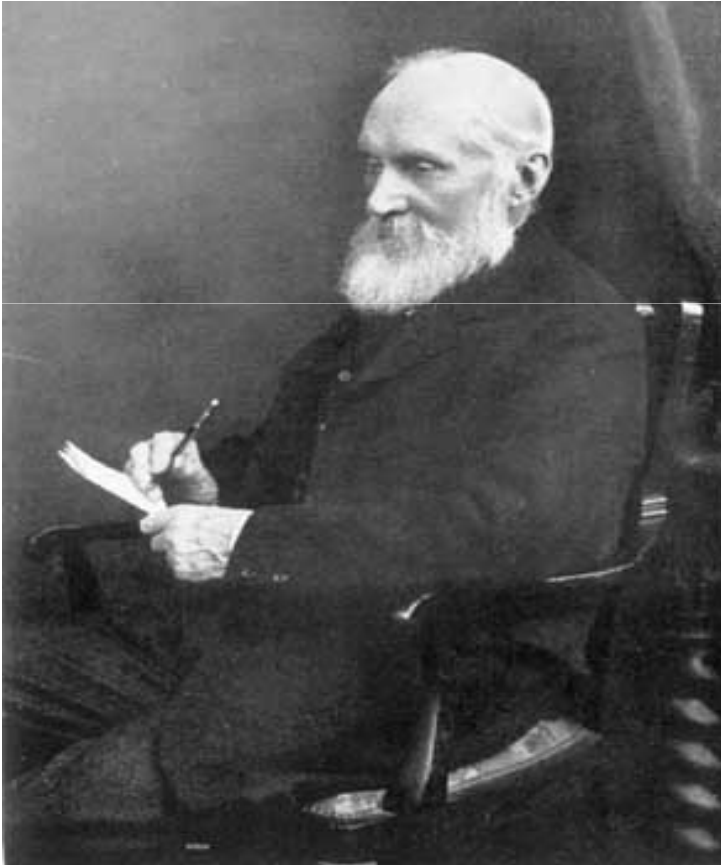
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Dangers of predicting the future



- **“I never make predictions, especially about the future.”**
- **Sam Goldwyn Mayer**

Predictions of Lord Kelvin, president of the Royal Society, 1890-95



- **"Radio has no future"**
- **"Heavier than air flying machines are impossible"**
- **"X rays will prove to be a hoax"**

What wasn't predicted

- **Explosion of the internet**
- **Berlin wall coming down**
- **September 11**
- **Credit crunch**

What has been predicted and hasn't happened

- **Paperless office**
- **Leisure society**
- **Death of the book**

Looking to the future: common mistakes

- **Making predictions rather than attaching probabilities to possibilities**
- **Simply extrapolating current trends**
- **Thinking of only one future**
- **People consistently overestimate the effect of short term change and underestimate the effect of long term change.** *Ian Morrison, former president of the Institute for the Future*

Why bother with the future?

- **"If you think that you can run an organisation in the next 10 years as you've run it in the past 10 years you're out of your mind."**
- **CEO, Coca Cola**

Why bother with the future?

- **“The future belongs to the unreasonable ones, the ones who look forward not backward, who are certain only of uncertainty, and who have the ability and the confidence to think completely differently.”**
- **Charles Handy quoting Bernard Shaw**

Why bother with the future?

- **The point is not to predict the future but to prepare for it and to shape it**

Scenarios

- **Plausible descriptions of different futures with limited overlap**
- **Developed by Shell, widely used in the public sector--for example, in South Africa and with AIDS in Africa**
- **Not predictions**
- **They are what might happen not what you want to happen**
- **Aids to thinking; “assumption smashers”**