

FUTUREtakes

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From the Desk of Tim Mack, President, World Future Society



The 2007 Minnesota conference has come and gone, and WFS is viewing it as a great accomplishment. By all measures, it was a success. Of course, my personal measure of success is a very old fashioned one (although I review conference survey results as well) – I just judge by how many times members come up to me, phone me or e-mail me saying “Boy, that was a great conference!”

We hit a new high in Toronto, where the response was immediate and very positive, but Minneapolis was significantly beyond that level, both in term of the volume of positive feedback and its intensity. When a significant number of people say, “I want to go back and start a WFS chapter in my home town!” – that is a good conference....

And it wasn't just the ‘stimulating and provocative keynotes’ or ‘great sessions’ or ‘I saw the Fox News camera team interviewing attendees’ or the number of hours the subject of ‘studying the future’ got covered on local network radio talk shows that encouraged me. It was also....”love all of the young people here” (we got a record number of scholarship contributions); and “this is my first WFS conference and I love it” (from people who until recently were not aware that the World Future Society existed) and “there are so many people from overseas!”

We must have made a good impression in Toronto, as Canada had the largest group of non-US attendees (although it is also true that Minneapolis is very convenient to the border). In true NAFTA spirit, the next largest group was Mexico, which has a national centennial pending (more to come)....From then on South Korea and the United Kingdom were tied, followed by Taiwan and Brazil (both very active in foresight). Finland and Australia were next (also very active futures communities) followed by Germany, Japan, Belgium Sweden and France....All in all, there were 30 countries represented.

However, I would like to conclude mention of the conference by noting how shocked and dismayed we all were by the Minneapolis bridge tragedy right at the end of the conference. Luckily, only the Professional Forum and Minnesota Futurists event were still going on, and no conference attendees or local futurists were injured in the bridge collapse.

The Learning Section of the Society has already begun planning for an Education and Learning Summit day-long program at the DC conference in 2008, and I encourage any of the members of the local chapter who wants to get involved in making that conference one of our best to date to contact me at tmack@wfs.org. In general, Society membership and conference attendance continue to climb, as does the popularity of the WFS website. Web traffic over last 12 months was up by two million hits over the

previous year, sometimes running as high as three-quarters of a million hits per month (or three times last year's traffic).

Overseas translations of *The Futurist* (in both Korean and Spanish) are well underway, and are expected to debut soon in South Korea and Mexico, and a Chinese version is under discussion. Ed Cornish's book, *Futuring: The Exploration of the Future*, has been translated into Korean, Arabic and even Mongolian, with more to come and a new edition under consideration.

Finally, press coverage of foresight, the Society, and futuring in general has been very positive of late and the level of understanding and utilization of futures tools and techniques is growing by leaps and bounds. We are even getting ahead of ourselves. I did a local radio program on a Boston station recently, and our conference will not be in that city till 2010 – talk about foresight! All in all, a good time to be a futurist! I wish all of you a good autumn....and good futuring!