

Baltimore in the Future Tense Field of Our Future

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[Baltimore in the Future Tense](#)
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Draft 3

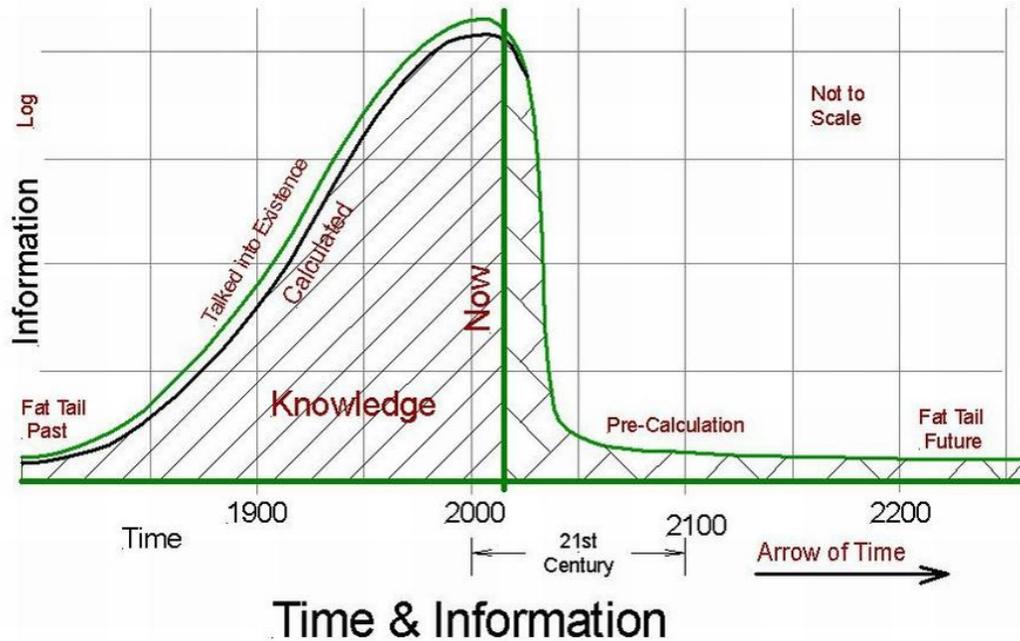


One author

What is a Field of Our Future?

A Field of Our Future (FOF) is a paper that provides the technical and background information for a piece of work, such as a short story. This paper provides extensive technical details focused on the near future. It is intended to allow a person with less technical training but higher humanities skills to produce a piece of work that provides a positive vision of success against one of the great problems of the 21st Century (Global Warming, etc.).

This is exactly the type of work that is needed for [Baltimore in the Future Tense](#). A separate FOF is written for each piece and the story itself is developed in a separate file.



Technical Description:

The word “field” is carefully chosen here and means very much what it means in terms like an electric field or a gravitational field. It refers to a volume of space in which everything within that space behaves by a well-defined set of rules.

In the Field of Our Future the rules come from three separate sources:

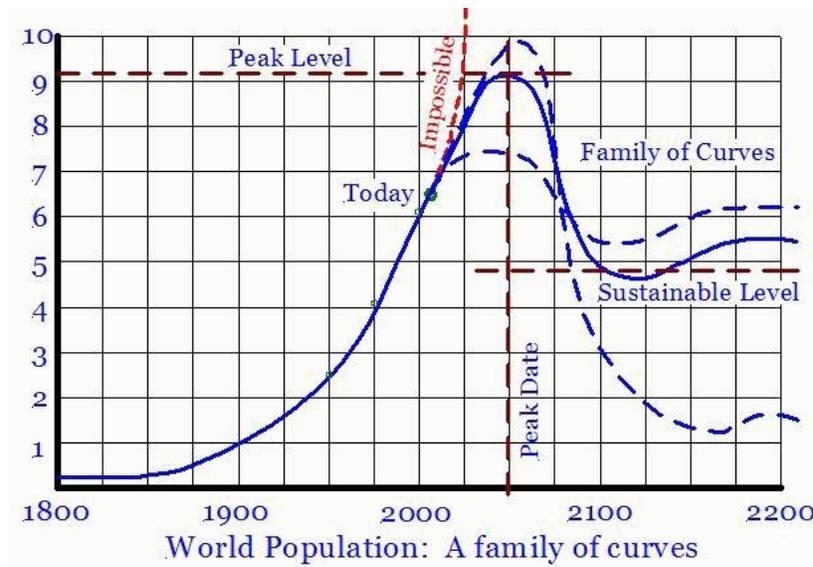
1. **Newtonian Ephemeris** – These are predictions based on Newton’s Laws and include when the sun will rise and the ebb and flow of the tides. These are very predictable out for a very long time, thousands of years at least, and form a very long, fat tail on our graph leading far into the future.
2. **Computer Models** – There are things that can be well predicted with computer models like world human population. With a substantial effort we can predict these for some time into the future but they soon are overwhelmed by chaos and become unpredictable. On our graph these show up as a large bulge in the near future that quickly drops. Exactly how far into the future we can predict is set by the level of chaos associated with a specific model. Calculating this parameter then is as important as the prediction itself.
3. **Talked into Existence** – These are social elements, called Memes that are a function of language, like the Constitution of the United States. Technically, memes made of information that is operating within the human brain. Many have been demonstrated to be anti-fragile. They are subject to change but they can persist even through major shocks.

The graph above, Time & Information, shows what we can know about our future and our past. It shows a long, fat tail leading out into the future that we can calculate and that we can count on.

The graph then shows that we can predict the near future but only out a relatively short distance. The farther an element is into chaos, the quicker we must discount our computer model. Note that the 21st Century is marked by high levels of chaos. That we cannot predict an element also means that we can effect it in the future.

The left side of the graph shows that our knowledge of the past is also limited. We know the most about the recent past but the available information drops again as time passes down to another long, fat tail. This long tail is often quite literally carved in stone.

One of our most important lessons from Chaos Theory is that small changes in the present will produce major changes at a later time. This is sometimes called the Butterfly effect and it means that our efforts today can affect the future even if they appear inconsequential at the present.



Pieces of a FOF:

A FOF contains a number of specific sections:

1. Technical Elements:

These are bits of information about the specific technical subject area focusing on the near future. They are exactly what can and what cannot be predicted. They are what is likely to happen, what might happen with our good efforts, and what cannot happen.

This element should contain a statement of the Big Picture and the steps leading down to the specific problem being worked.

2. Suggested Plot Elements:

At first these are things that the technical people feel could happen to the characters. The writing team can then greatly expand on both plot and characters. There are usually far more of these than can fit into one short story.

3. Clear Focus:

This is a short statement, about 100 words, that explains the focus of the piece. This can be quite difficult to write and it may take several iterations to work it out. In the end, good ideas that do not fit this focus will have to be edited out of the piece.

4. Suggested Characters:

These are suggestions for people who might appear in the story. Again first from the technical team members and then expanded by the writers.

5. Community:

A discussion of the target community with an eye toward building characters.

6. Available Graphic:

These are graphics that could be used in the piece. They either have to be owned by the project, or have a clear source references showing they are open for use.

7. Existing Project Links:

These are Internet links to existing parts of the project.

8. Songs and Movies:

These are references to cultural items that relate to the theme being worked.

9. References:

These are extensive references to materials that provide technical information. They are largely books and Web links.

Rapid Prototype:

From a technical stand point the final piece, like a short story, can be considered a prototype of works to follow and we need to produce examples very quickly. The rapid prototype process is used by entrepreneurs extensively for developing innovative devices and but less often for memes.

The primary advantage of Rapid Prototyping is that it provides something very specific that people can review and understand. Such a prototype is then far better than simply descriptions in words and graphics. It is much more likely to win you the resources you need to move the idea forward.

Community Input:

Stories with a vision of success can be used to address many problems of the 21st Century including both structural racism and terrorism. Addressing specific problems requires listening to specific communities. With input from a community the writer can then flesh out characters that are meaningful for the young member of that community.

Story Development Process:

The outline below applies the Rapid Prototype idea to writing. This writing process is often done by a team through a number of steps:

1. Build a team
 - a. STEM and Humanities are both needed.
 - b. This step is often done electronically.
 - c. A number of FOF's may be written by the technical team and offered to perspective writers.
2. Assemble a Field of Our Future
 - a. This is the technical part of the effort.
 - b. The best available information on the future is assembled.
 - i. Build ideas
 - ii. Build references
 - c. Possible ideas for the plot are also assembled.
 - i. Technical Elements
 - ii. Plot Elements
 - iii. Possible characters
 - d. Not all the ideas will make it to the story.
3. Develop Plot and Characters
 - a. A number of people contribute ideas for plot elements and characters.
 - b. People in the target community are interviewed for ideas on character development.
4. Write the Story
 - a. Dialog trumps description.
 - b. Usually there is one primary author.
 - c. Secondary authors often flesh out the piece.
 - d. Iteration on technical and plot elements is needed.
5. Proof and Edit
 - a. Several word processing proofs are run as additions are made.
 - i. Several iterations will be needed.
 - b. Then read the piece out loud, by reading or with Natural Language.

- c. Post the story on the Web site as a "Work in Progress".
- d. Then have someone other than the authors do a major edit.
 - i. Pay for a review by professional editor.
- e. Make the editor's revisions
 - i. This can be a very painful process for the author.
- f. Update the FOF
- g. Post the story as "Edited".

Plot Types:

Most of the plots of blockbuster movies these days have basically just one plot: (1) bad guy has power, (2) underdog good guy fights to make things right, (3) good guy wins through valent effort. Unfortunately this plot rarely applies in the 21st Century.

We then have a problem. We do not have any good candidates to be the bad guys in our stories. We a new plot line and it runs something like this:

1. We now see a great problem that we must address or billions will live short unhappy lives.
2. It is nobody's fault; it is everybody's fault.
3. But, there are things we can do.
4. We get in action.
5. We do not work alone, but work in mass.
6. People in action are interesting people do interesting things.
7. A heroic commitment is needed to just to say in action.
8. The results of our efforts will not be known for 50 years, but we are confident we will do some real good.

The only candidate we have for the bad guy are agents that actively block progress on addressing the problems of the 21st Century, the deniers. One real example is the Better Business Bureau (BBB). Currently they are taking big money from dying industries, like tobacco and coal, to block effective change. As a result, many forward-looking companies have resigned from the BBB. The problem is that even if we beat the BBB in a story that would not fix the underlying problems. We need do directly attack the real problems.

One of the great Greek playwrights left us a list of all the plots lines he felt were even possible. As I remember there were 23. Today over half of them simply no longer exist as they were about the obligations one has to one's local king. There are no more local kings. Many plot lines have faded in the past and new ones have arisen to take their place. We need to build a new plot line for the 21st Century.

Suggested Characters Types:

It is the responsibility of the humanist members of the team to develop the characters but the technical members of the team may suggest plot lines and characters in the FOF:

Techies:

Most of our stories with contain one or two technical characters who hold conversations explaining the technical issues of the story. These characters may, or may not, be main characters. The writer's problem is to explain the technical issues without weighing down the story.

Counselor:

Teams in our stories will need access to a counselor. In "The Big Moon Dig" this feature is filled by the Wizard. In "Star Trek, The Next Generation" it was filled by Counselor Troy. This function rarely appears on the Internet at present. The counselor could most certainly be an AI.