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Institute for Alternative Futures

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## ***In This Issue***

[Jim Dator, IAF Co-Founder and Board Member, and Hazel Henderson Named Futurists Of The Year](#)

[Note on the State of Futures \(Jim Dator, human extinction\)](#)

[“No Secrets, No Lies”: Eric Meade Addresses Communications Executives](#)

[From Right to Responsibility: What Does the “American Experience” Mean for the Success of Health Care Reform?](#)

[Megatrends App for iPhone](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

## ***News & Events***

### **Jim Dator, IAF Co-Founder and Board Member, and Hazel Henderson Named Futurists Of The Year**

by Clem Bezold, Founder and Chairman of the Board

[The Foresight Network](#) with over 2,400 members, including me, awarded two outstanding futures thinkers with the newly created *Futurist of the Year Laurel*: Hazel Henderson and Jim Dator.

Dator, Alvin Toffler, and I founded IAF in 1977. Jim has remained on IAF's board, was a major mentor in my transition from political scientist to futurist, and has been supplying IAF with many interns from his futures graduate program at the University of Hawaii, including IAF President Jonathan Peck.

More on Dator from the International Space University:

*Jim Dator, PhD, is Professor and Director of the Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii at Manoa, a premier futures-oriented academic research institute, particularly concerned with Pacific hemisphere futures. He served as President/Secretary General of the World Futures Studies Federation 1983-1993 and was on the executive council of the World Academy of Art & Science; he serves on the editorial boards of Foresight, Futures, Intergenerational Justice Review, Journal of Futures Studies, On the Horizon, Technological Forecasting & Social Change, and World Future Review. He is much occupied with trajectories in governance, space, ethics, and law and justice; with educating and preparing for the futures, and the futures of education itself; his TV and other media presentations have targeted the general public.*

IAF emerged in part from the work of the “Committee for Anticipatory Democracy.” Hazel Henderson was a member of this committee. She has remained a friend and inspiration to IAF. Here is how the Foresight Network described her:

*Hazel Henderson, D.Sc.Hon., FRSA, is an evolutionary economist, advocate for equitable ecologically and sustainable human development, and the founder and president of Ethical Markets Media, USA and Brazil ([www.ethicalmarkets.com](http://www.ethicalmarkets.com)). She has written nine books, including*



*the award-winning Ethical Markets: Growing the Green Economy, and her editorials are syndicated by InterPress Service. She co-developed the widely used alternative to GNP, the Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators, regularly updated at [www.calvert-henderson.com](http://www.calvert-henderson.com). She serves on editorial boards for journals such as Futures Research Quarterly and The State of the Future Report and advisory boards such as the Instituto Ethos, the World Business Academy, the Climate Prosperity Alliance and, previously, the World Watch Institute (1975-2001). Henderson is an Honorary Member of the Club of Rome, shared the 1996 Global Citizen Award with Nobelist A. Perez Esquivel, and is a Fellow to Britain's Royal Society.*

Congratulations to Jim and Hazel for well deserved recognition!

## Note on the State of Futures

by Clem Bezold

There is a significant amount of literature on the future, including our work here at IAF as well as magazines, blogs, newsletters and several refereed journals. I will periodically highlight interesting contributions.

Journal of Futures Studies Focuses on Jim Dator

Jim Dator and I are among the Consulting Editors for the [Journal of Futures Studies \(JFS\)](#), one of the major refereed futures journals, edited by Sohail Inayatullah and available for free online. Sohail asked Jonathan Peck and me to contribute to the November 2009 JFS issue which focuses significantly on Jim Dator's work. Jonathan in ["Some Theories of Social Change for Futures Practitioners"](#) describes Jim's challenge to his students to develop their own theories of social change and explains the value of various disciplines in thinking about the future and developing forecasts and scenarios. My article, ["Jim Dator's Alternative Futures and the Path to IAF's Aspirational Futures"](#) relates Jim's mentorship to IAF, including earlier versions of his alternative futures used in IAF projects in the late 1970s and early 1980s. (Jim's basic archetypes have remained remarkably consistent.) Jim's own article, ["Alternative Futures at the Manoa School."](#) explains and illustrates his approach to developing four key archetypal futures (continued growth, collapse, discipline, and transformation) as a learning background for envisioning preferred futures. He gives examples of scenario sets using this approach and provides very usable guidance for anyone interested on how to develop and conduct a futures approach.

The JFS November 2009 issue also includes a series of articles on [Zero Zone Theory](#) – a new attempt to develop a universal common unit of measurement that will allow comparison of all fundamental aspects of the physical world. Some people would call this proposal ridiculous, and you may also wonder what it has to do with Dator. It turns out that one of his students, a former journalist, had previously discovered the author of this concept. When this student brought Zero Zone Theory to his attention, Jim recognized that it conforms to Dator's Second Law of Futures: "any useful idea about the futures should appear to be ridiculous".

Special Issue on Human Extinction in December 2009 Issue of **Futures**

In doing good futures work it is important to consider what could go wrong. A special journal issue of Futures makes a valuable contribution to thinking about what could go dramatically wrong, such as human extinction. The [December 2009 special issue on Human Extinction of Futures: The journal of policy, planning and futures studies](#), edited by Bruce Tonn and Don MacGregor, has some good news – it is difficult to imagine killing off *all* humans. However the scenarios do imagine events that could lead to a rapid and *massive* loss of human life, including nuclear war, climate change, pandemics, famine, asteroids, and super earthquakes. In more than one paper a massive volcanic eruption leads to global cooling. This could be followed by runaway global warming. Add what nature does to us, human folly, ignorance, greed, incompetence as well as the possibility of a global economic crisis caused by destruction of world's oil reserves. All of these examples of what could go wrong do not necessarily lead to human extinction, but they could.

An article by Carpenter and Bishop provides an interesting review of past extinctions and major catastrophic events: floods, tsunamis, cyclones, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions that killed 100,000 to 3.7 million people at a time. 19 wars since the 14th century have each killed as "few" as 1 million to a high of 50 million per war. In April of this year ash clouds from a smaller Icelandic volcano disrupted air travel; in 1783 a larger volcanic eruption in Iceland killed over 9000 people.

Joe Coates provides a review of the nature of threats and their outcomes on the end of 1) cultures, 2) civilizations, 3) humankind, and 4) the Earth. Coates' list of potential threats for ending humankind includes greenhouse warming and a planetoid hit (larger than an asteroid hit). However, this list is short compared to the many threats Coates identifies that would kill 10,000 to 10 billion people.

Other articles in the special issue of *Futures* continue the exploration of extinction scenarios.

Not to be outdone, even posthumously, Isaac Asimov had weighed in on this subject as well. In his 1979 book *A Choice of Catastrophes*, human extinction falls into “Catastrophes of the Fourth Class”. Catastrophes of the First Class would lead to the end of life in the universe (e.g. from Black Holes). Catastrophes of the Second Class would mean an end of life in our solar system (e.g. collisions with the sun or the death of our sun), and catastrophes of the Third Class would end all life on earth (e.g. Comets, asteroids, super earthquakes, removal of magnetism).

Asimov’s first chapter on humanity ending Fourth Class catastrophes is a fascinating look at the history of various threats from other life forms. The real threat to humanity it turns out is from the “conflict of intelligence”, particularly members of civilization harming each other. Asimov argues this point with the example of distilled liquors which were widely used to prevent Black Death plague; it did little more than spread drunkenness. However, the one true catastrophe Asimov thought in 1979 that we could reasonably fear was an all-out thermonuclear war.

We can learn much from thinking about threats, including human extinction, and the *Futures* special issue and Asimov’s writings provide great resources.



### **“No Secrets, No Lies”: Eric Meade Addresses Communications Executives**

*IAF senior futurist Eric Meade speaks on the future of corporate communications*

IAF senior futurist Eric Meade presented a group of senior communication executives with a scenario for 2030 in which consumers base all of their purchasing decisions on an authentic desire to advance the human endeavor without leaving anyone behind. Speaking at the annual conference of the Council of Communication Management on May 5 in Philadelphia, Eric built upon the findings of *The Authentic Enterprise*, an influential 2007 report by the communication profession’s Arthur W. Page Society. This report found that three trends in particular – the emergence of a digital information commons, the reality of a global economy, and the empowerment of myriad new stakeholders – were fundamentally changing the role of the communication manager within corporations.

Eric invited participants to see these trends as part of a larger evolution to a “post-conventional” global society. In doing so, he drew upon psychological models of individual development developed by Lawrence Kohlberg and others that describe growth through “pre-conventional,” “conventional,” and “post-conventional” stages. “Authenticity” is a feature of the post-conventional stage, where self-reflection leads individuals to transcend the identities they have previously constructed from the outside world and to follow an inner calling. The globalization and digital information commons described by the Page Society report have increased the level of global self-reflection, which has empowered new stakeholders to advocate a variety of new perspectives.

As this process of human evolution has played out over the past 35,000 years, the communication profession has evolved as well. In the pre-conventional era (before the emergence of urban societies), shamans or oracles interpreted signs from the spirits or gods who determined the fate of the humans below. In the conventional era (from the earliest city-stages through the modern era), communicators conveyed the voice of authority (God, the pope, the king, the CEO, etc.) to people who wanted to know their place in the hierarchy and to move up within it. Communications took the form of papal edicts, imperial decrees, corporate policy, and even the brand identities which people co-opted to flaunt their material success.

Based on this approach, Eric outlined a scenario of what a post-conventional society might look like in the year 2030 and facilitated a discussion of how the role of communication manager might change. Following a lively discussion, Eric assured participants that the shift to post-conventional is nothing to fear. Rather, it offers tremendous opportunities for society, companies, and communication professionals. But there’s a catch. Just as a self-reflective individual has difficulty lying to himself, a self-reflective global society will have an unspoken rule: No secrets, no lies. The distinction between “external” and “internal” communications will soon be a thing of the past. Those who cling to it will find themselves increasingly criticized and censured by an increasing number of stakeholders. Conversely, those who unify their companies’ internal and external messages and integrate them with the company’s operations will say what needs to be said and will be rewarded for their ability to do so.

## From Right to Responsibility: What Does the "American Experience" Mean for the Success of Health Care Reform?

IAF is co-sponsoring a roundtable luncheon discussion with Altarum Institute on June 17 at the Newseum in Washington D.C. The discussion is "From Right to Responsibility: What Does the 'American Experience' Mean for the Success of Health Care Reform?" The speakers will include: IAF President Jonathan Peck; Journal of the American Medical Society (JAMA) Editor-in Chief Catherine D'Angeles, and; Kennedy School of Government Adjunct Lecturer in Public Policy and Faculty Research Fellow Sheila Burke. Learn more about the discussion [here](#), and if you would like to be invited please send your contact information to [futurist@altfutures.org](mailto:futurist@altfutures.org).

## Megatrends App for iPhone

Megatrends are pivotal to the development of future markets. That is why getting informed about them is increasingly a requirement for future-oriented strategy development. For this purpose, you can now download the iPhone-App "Megatrends 1.0". The App was developed by [Z\\_Punkt The Foresight Company](#), a leading consultancy for strategic future issues and based in Germany. With Megatrends 1.0, Z\_punkt brings the 20 most important megatrends of our time to the screen as an informative trenddatabase, including detailed commentary, a scalable diagram, and a compilation of key aspects. To find out what these megatrends spell for your company or your own life, Megatrends 1.0 lets you evaluate and filter those which have strategic relevance for you. More details on the App are available [here](#). Megatrends 1.0 (1.3 MB) is available at the iTunes AppStore for \$0.99 in the category Economy.

## Upcoming Events

[Wiser Futures Workshop](#), WorldFuture 2010: Sustainable Futures, Strategies, and Technologies, IAF Futurists Clem Bezold and Eric Meade, July 8th, 2010 in Boston, MA.

[Future Paradigms of Poverty and Development](#), Senior Futurist & Vice President Eric Meade, WorldFuture 2010: Sustainable Futures, Strategies, and Technologies Conference, on July 10, 2010, 11:00-12:00n, in Boston, MA.

The Institute for Alternative Futures is a 501(c)3 non-profit research and education organization based in Alexandria, VA. IAF was founded in 1977 by Clem Bezold, Alvin Toffler, and James Dator. IAF has a long track record of using forecasts, scenarios, visioning, and other futures tools to help leading organizations understand the likely, challenging, and visionary developments that may take place in their environments, and to develop robust and visionary strategies that account for the inherent uncertainty of the future. IAF's past clients include the World Health Organization, AARP, American Cancer Society, and Rockefeller Foundation, as well as a wide range of multinational corporations through its for-profit subsidiary, Alternative Futures Associates. To learn more about what we can do for your organization, call us at (703) 684-5880 or write to [futurist@altfutures.org](mailto:futurist@altfutures.org).

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[back to top](#) | [about IAF](#) | [about AFA](#) | [IAF futurists](#) | [news & events](#)

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