

# **SHAPES AND SCENARIOS IN THE FUTURE OF VOUNTEERISM**

## **FORECASTING AND CREATING YOUR OWN**

Prepared for

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August 1989

This is part of the emerging HORIZONS series of papers prepared by the Center for Creative Community in furtherance of its mission: "In our vision of creative community, dreams are nurtured and supported rather than ridiculed and ignored."

We invite you to inquire about other publications in the series. Currently, they include the FRONTIERS 1989 compendium summarizing creative projects and approaches to volunteerism and (provisional title) A RECONSIDERATION OF VOLUNTEERISM: SOME EXERCISES FOR THE CREATIVE GADFLY.

## OUTLINE

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# I. INTRODUCTION: PURPOSES, PARADOXES, AND PITFALLS

## A. Purposes

Futuring is an attempt to predict trends and events which haven't occurred yet. Usually, it also involves attempts to control these events or at least deflect them in a desired direction.\*

The future has two parts, one shared by all humanity on our planet, and another that is unique to you as an individual, your program, your organization, community, etc. Thus, a revolution in Chile is desperately important to the people who live there; it is vastly less urgent and immediate in its future potential for a hospital volunteer program in Peoria. Conversely, an impending \$5,000 local budget cut may be crucial in Peoria, but wouldn't make much difference to the national budget of Chile.

This unique component is the concern of this guidebook for we believe every person needs to be her or his own futurist, and that competency as a futurist should be added to the list of skills expected of the volunteer leader. Forecasts from Ottawa, Washington, New York, Chicago, Toronto, and Los Angeles are only a rough starting point - unless you happen to live in one of these cities.

Forecasting\* has its fascinating moments, but on the whole it is a difficult, time-consuming enterprise, requiring considerable tolerance of ambiguity, and having little in the way of supportive equipment. So why bother? There are several reasons:

1. Sheer curiosity. Futuring may be satisfying enough as a spectator sport.
2. Hope. Futuring is a chance to escape the frustrations of the present, dream of better days, and plan for them. It is no accident that the theme song of the U.S. Civil Rights movement was "We Shall Overcome", and one of its greatest moments the "I Have a Dream" speech of Dr. Martin Luther King. In the field of volunteerism, hope as a reason for futuring was suggested by a black woman, a volunteer coordinator in a prison -- surely a person who deals with challenges "aplenty" in the present. So, futuring is a process we might expect to sustain the burnout-prone careerist.
3. Somewhat ironically, attempting to predict the future is one of the best ways to understand the present. If you plan a future trip to, say, Edmonton, Alberta, it does make a difference whether you're starting from Denver, Colorado, or Melbourne, Australia. If your starting point is Denver and you decide to travel by car, you have to take stock of the current condition of your car, your finances, etc. Similarly, if you're predicting that more youth will be interested in volunteering in the next five years, and you want to attract your share of them, you need first to understand thoroughly the strengths and weaknesses of your current work with youth volunteers.
4. Futuring enables us to exercise at least some control over our destiny as individuals or as organizations. The position is somewhere between two extremes in belief about the nature of reality. At one extreme, we are helpless spectators of a totally predetermined future. If you don't like it, get off the planet! At the other extreme, the future is totally random, and cannot be influenced. You might still want to get off the planet, but in this case you can't even find the planet.

Our view is intermediate: Sometimes, to some extent, you can intervene to shape the future in a desired direction; you also have an equivalent capacity to choose courses of action leading to disaster. To be sure, if a lightning strike is headed your way in the immediate future, you don't have any real choice in regard to moving out of its way. But, you might have had some prior choices which determined how vulnerable you would be to a lightning strike. Again, except for the claim of one recent U. S. Presidential candidate, you can't stop the predicted hurricane; nevertheless,

\*"Forecasting", "Predicting", and "Futuring" are used as approximate synonyms in this guidebook. More precisely, however, "futuring" suggests an attempt to control the future, as well as foresee it. The other two terms lack this connotation.

foreknowledge can help you prepare for it and soften its negative impact. In both these examples, prediction can at least facilitate avoidance of the inevitable, or preparation to deal with its impact.

There are possible gradations in degree of control for us. If, to use the previous example, a larger pool of potential youth volunteers is predicted for the future, there is much we can choose to do or not do to make our program more attractive to them. At this level of time-expressed empowerment, we have Gregory Baum's ringing declaration: "Every person is called upon to create their own future."

To a certain extent, futurists do more than forecast a fixed future; they can invent futures. The futurist perspective is a necessary ingredient in long-range planning because it helps us understand clearly that any future is a mix of our capability and the world's inevitability. Some planners operate -- unconsciously perhaps -- as if they had total power to shape the future. This is like planning for a picnic, the food, entertainment, location, etc., without taking account of weather predictions, e.g., the possibility of a storm which we do not control. For this reason, good long-range planning is full of alternative plans (B's, C's, and etc.'s) to take account of future influences we don't control. Again, consider the hospital auxiliary which plans to use next year's gift shop revenue to purchase needed equipment for the hospital. Some future inevitabilities not under complete control of the auxiliary had better be considered in this plan, e.g.:

- Will hospital policy or economic hard times cut into gift shop revenues next year?
- Will the hospital move to place management and staffing of the gift shop more directly in hospital hands, rather than as a volunteer operation?

5. Futuring not only recognizes that we can to some extent control our own future; but also recognizes how the future may influence us. The conventional view of causation is that individuals or organizations are largely the product of what has gone before -- the past pushing us into the future. This view underestimates the extent to which, conversely, the future pulls us toward it. Some of the most effective and fulfilled people and organizations I know live in the grip of dreams, refusing as they can, the restrictions of their past. Indeed, the nicest thing anyone has ever said about the Center for Creative Community is that it is an organization that lives five years in the future. (Not everyone on our board is entirely pleased with that assessment, I might add.) Philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset makes the point eloquently: "Life is a series of collisions with the future; it is not a sum of what we have been, but what we yearn to be."

If indeed we are to be moved by visions of time to come, we would be well-advised to pay more attention to understanding that future.

## **B. Paradoxes In Predicting The Future (or at least puzzlements)**

1. Just making a prediction tends to change it. This can be beneficial in preventing or mitigating "bad" predictions and in improving the probability of "good" ones. The prediction that continuing your current sunbathing habits will substantially increase the risk of skin cancer can change behavior in a way to help make that prediction less likely. Similarly, the confident forecast that United Way will reach its ambitious fundraising target this year can create optimism and mobilize resources in such a way as to make success more likely. Conversely, pessimistic predictions may negatively impact performance as self-fulfilling prophecy, and overly optimistic ones simply set you up for failure. In every case, though, the process of prediction tends to affect its product.
2. The "easiest" predictions are often the best (most accurate). As a general rule, I suggest you start with predictions most likely to come true, if only to build morale in this uncertain business. I usually begin a day-long workshop on futuring by predicting that we will break for lunch about 11:45 AM, and I go on from there to prophesy death, taxes, and formal volunteer recognition banquets. I once finished a futuring workshop with a forecast that if we met again, years hence, participants would still not know how to spell my name. We did, and they didn't.

One good basis for "sure things" is their unvarying occurrence in the past, though even here we should be prepared to deal with the occasional "mutant emergent". This Frankensteinian term was coined by professional futurists to include usually unpleasant (to put it mildly) surprises like the atomic bomb, which changed the nature of warfare, and, in more recent times, the AIDS virus. The mutant emergent can sometimes be a pleasant surprise, as cold fusion will be if it works out as a practical energy source. But mutant emergents tend to be traumatic; for example, the surprise firing of the top executive you were counting on to continue active, positive support of your program.

Sticking to shorter future time frames is another way to increase the probability of prophecy; I suggest between six months and three years. Less than six months (say, next week) may be too easy, and, in any case, doesn't usually allow enough time to prepare for predicted events or react to them. Very long-term predictions may be fun as fantasy, but are less useful as strategy. As time unfolds, the lattice of possibilities increases geometrically, or even astronomically, and is soon beyond the realm of ordinary probability. To be sure, I was once told by someone who lived in an Asian community, that Asian people tend to plan successfully in twenty-year time frames! Perhaps so. I only suggest (enviously) that they probably cycle back to adjust predictions more often than every twenty years.

A third way of increasing the certainty of predictions is to predict the options people or organizations will have, rather than try to foresee exactly which of these options they will take. For example, it may be easier to prophesy that a healthy new volunteer program will be faced at some point with a growth/no growth decision, than to predict which way it will go at such a crossroads. In Section II, an entire exercise, "Choicepoint Process", is devoted to this.

3. "Backcasting" is the best preparation for forecasting. "Back-and-forth casting" is even better. This is the wisdom in Churchill's warning: "The nation that forgets its history, has no future." Or, at least, that nation will have little understanding of its future. Only consider: The major way we have to predict the future is to project trends from the past and present. If I don't "backcast" to discover that an executive has had much experience in the past as a volunteer, and what kind of experience that was, there's a lot I will miss in forecasting how that executive will support my volunteer program. Nor is such backcasting always as simple as discovery of fixed facts. Totalitarian governments may be the worst offenders in rewriting history (a la George Orwell), but most of us do it to some extent, especially when faced with failure or exposure. The backcaster in such situations must be able to penetrate self-deception as well as deliberate dissembling.

"Back-and-forth casting" is a delving into history to find whether your program or organization did some futuring, the predictions of which have already come due. A great deal can be learned from what these predictions were, which ones were accurate, which were not, and why. But we rarely do that. I've participated in about 15 futuring studies in volunteerism and returned to the scene of the crime only twice at due date. The idea seems to be much like "do good and disappear", only here it is more like "predict and disappear", or at least have the decency to die before your prophecy comes to term. Whenever possible, I would very much like to see prognosticators brought back on or near the target date of their predictions to discuss results. Perhaps then, wiser for the experience, they could forecast the next slice of the future. I once had a valuable experience of this type. In 1968, as a coordinator of volunteers and sometimes trainer in criminal justice volunteerism, I predicted that volunteers would just about disappear from the criminal justice system in five years even though in 1968 volunteers were entering the system at a substantial and steadily increasing rate. I prophesied this in a national newsletter out of deep concern that increasing numbers of volunteers were simply exacerbating already strong correctional staff resistance to volunteers, while we as coordinators stood by and did little but deplore the situation.

By 1973 my prediction was mercifully forgotten (as they usually are), except by me. I say "mercifully" because my estimate of no volunteers left was only off by about half a million! Interestingly enough, however, the rate of increase had begun to flatten out, and within a few years the number of volunteers in the system leveled off, e.g., stopped increasing. So, though the

prediction was a disaster, statistically speaking, the warning it was wrapped in -- start doing something about staff resistance to volunteers -- probably should have been better heeded. And I learned plenty about the awesome momentum (inertia) of what was essentially a social movement of volunteers into the criminal justice system of that time. Even if the track is blocked, you don't stop a freight train all at once.

4. The best way to predict the future is also the worst. As just noted, the best, perhaps the only way, to foresee the future is by taking a running start from the past. The danger is that in so doing, we will underestimate the subtlety of nature. This happens when we go beyond acceptance of past influences on the future to assume that the past will influence the future in the same way as it influences the present. That usually doesn't happen; current trends accelerate, decelerate, or even reverse themselves. And even when you can predict more or less of a vital factor in the volunteer future -- e.g., more working women, seniors, youth, the very process of management itself -- you cannot be sure these factors will behave in the same way in the future. The Section II exercise on Dubious Demographics deals with this point in depth, as does the example in the next paragraph regarding older people.
5. The assumptions that served so well in the past may be the greatest barriers to imaginative visualizing of positive futures. The entertaining of new and different assumptions enables us to imbue our possible future with qualitative as well as mere quantitative change. Only consider the barrenness of assuming that more older people in the future simply means more people in need of services. Once that anchor assumption is lifted, we are able to see that more older people in the future can also mean more wonderful volunteers to provide service.\* It is certainly not necessarily good news for the rocking chair business.

### C. Pitfalls: Some Things To Be Careful Of.

1. Try to be clear and consistent on who or what you will be predicting for or about. Yourself as an individual? Your volunteer program? Your organization or group as a whole? Your association or coalition? Your neighborhood? Your community? Your nation? Your choices in a framework for futuring are wide. Only be sure you carefully choose the "unit of study" you most want and stick to it. To be sure, you can't separate entirely the fate of your program/organization from yourself as an individual. But, at some point, you might leave that program so the strands must be separable.
2. Beware acting as if your program or organization were an island unto itself, unconnected to the mainland. In fact, the parts of the future in which you are most interested, e.g., youth development or volunteerism, are connected to the whole of society, e.g., the economy and/or major social demographic trends. Early on, you must therefore identify, from the society at large, what the futurists call "environmental factors" or outside influences which are likely to have an impact upon you and your life. (See Section II exercise on "Future Factor Analysis.")
3. Recognition of the importance of environmental factors that have an impact on the phenomenon studied does not mean that phenomenon is entirely passive; it may also act back upon these environmental factors. Thus, volunteerism will not only be affected by factors such as recession and/or an aging population, but also may affect these factors; for example, by helping to keep chronologically older people younger, both psychologically and physiologically. Also, we are beginning to realize that volunteers can contribute to economic development in a number of significant ways, at least to mitigate recession effects.
4. As already noted, the glamor of far future frameworks lures us with opportunity for fantasy. Less glamorous shorter frameworks, nevertheless, are your best bet if you seriously intend to help shape your own future; that is, unless time spans are too short, in which case you endanger making

\*An entire section of a parallel publication ("... Exercises for the Creative Gadfly") is devoted to discussion of these "anchors".

the goal too small. At the other extreme, overly long time frames might signify lack of commitment to actually making the goal happen.

5. Wishful thinking is the curse of the unwary futurist. There's a powerful, usually unconscious, temptation to read into the future what you hope will happen. Beware that, but know that deliberate self-conscious visualization of the ideal may have a place in realistic prophesy. In fact, futurists sometimes deliberately project three scenarios in studying a phenomenon: the best possible or ideal future; the most likely future, and the worst possible, or disaster scenario. (This strategy is further developed in the Section II exercise entitled "The Freedom To Dream: Visualizing Volunteer Futures.")
6. There is always a flurry of futuring around each year that ends in a zero -- the turn of a decade - - and volunteerism futuring has been no exception. What happens when we reach the year with three zeros at the end will probably be more like an orgy than a flurry. The more immediate point is the mistake of seeing future study as a relatively rare, elaborate and often ritualistic occasion rather than a routine ongoing process. Let's break the pattern of making a future prediction every ten years and forgetting it within ten months. Instead, let's continually cycle back to evaluate, refine, and renew our predictions, much as is suggested in Step 7 of the exercise on "Future Factor Analysis," Section IIA.

## II. SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR THE DO-IT-YOURSELF FUTURIST

Each of the seven strategies presented here can stand by itself as a framework for futuring; none of them do it for you. Strategies A through C share a theme of the future viewed as a set of crossroads. The General Purpose Strategy (G) is mainly a combination of C and E. Other combinations are possible; for example, there may be some synergy in E and F. One visualizes forward; the other, backward. You may wish to review and pilot test all the strategies before you decide which are most appropriate for your needs and situation.

At a futuring workshop, you may be the only representative of your program, organization, etc. Otherwise, futuring is just about the worst place to go it alone. Ideally, we want a stakeholders' group composed of workers or planners in the subject area (volunteers, staff, board members, politicians, etc.), plus those impacted by the program, situation, etc. (could be the same people, plus clients, patients, audience, etc.). If you're forecasting for yourself as an individual, family and friends might be included, maybe even a stranger or two. The stranger is often helpful in jolting us out of past ruts and what they produce: dismally dull predictions composed of just a little more of the same. The seven strategies are also designed to help get us out of grooves and mobilize the creative energies. Still, no process can guarantee that unimaginative people will produce imaginative results.

Be welcome to share with us your experiences using these strategies. We hope to hear from you in the foreseeable future. And now for the strategies:

### A. Future Factor Analysis

The purpose is to determine what you see as significant trends in volunteerism likely to affect you as an individual, your program or organization, neighborhood, etc. Then, you brainstorm a range of realistic choices you have in responding to the most powerful of these factors. Finally, from among the alternative responses to the factor, you pick the one which is most doable and desirable and begin planning to implement it.

#### 1. The Process

Step 1. Identify a range of significant factors which are likely to affect volunteerism generally in the years ahead. Do not evaluate heavily at this point; instead, try for a wide range of reasonably realistic "future factors" as in the sample listings given later. Your list may be quite different, though you may wish to use the one here as a starting point. Remind

participants that the order in which future factors are listed does not imply anything about their importance.

**Step 2/3.** From this list, choose the single key factor which will continue to have impact in the foreseeable future (Step 2) and will also have direct immediate impact on you (as individual, program, etc.) (Step 3). Unrest in Central America may be seen as likely to continue for some time (Step 2) but is not likely to influence your program immediately or directly (Step 3). Conversely, liability of board members may have important current effects on your ability to recruit board members (Step 3) but, probably won't continue as a crucially important factor in the future because of protective legislation currently coming on line (Step 2).

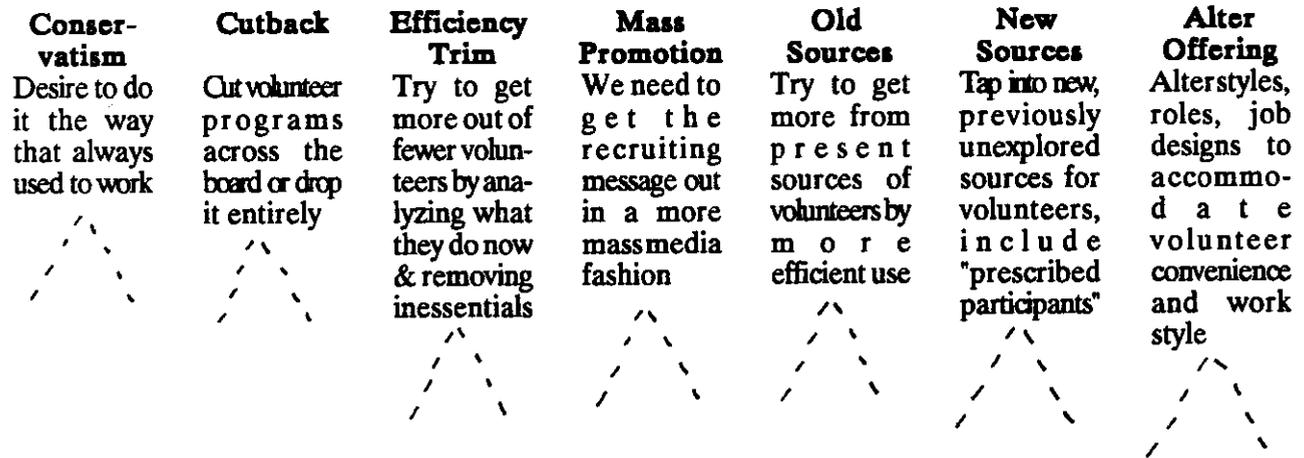
Let us say we chose "shortage of volunteers in relation to demand for them" as the key future factor best meeting both criteria: foreseeably continuing with focused importance for us. (Please note, the shortage is not necessarily true for all volunteer programs. Thus, certain programs in children's hospitals, and literacy tutoring seem to be exempt from the general shortage of volunteers experienced by most other programs.)

**Step 4.** Brainstorm alternative responses that might be made to the key factor. At this point, try not to be overly evaluative; just get as many reasonably relevant responses as you can. An example of this is given in Figure 1.

#### **VOLUNTEERISM AND THE FUTURE: Figure 1, the Volunteer Shortage**

**Major Trend Expected To Continue For At Least Next Two Or Three Years:** There will be a shortage of volunteers, especially "traditional" ones willing to work on a regular basis in an agency/organizational setting, under the supervision of paid staff.

#### **CHOICEPOINTS**



There may be other alternatives, of course. One choice you could add to any scenario is "Do Nothing" (See what happens, let it work itself out, laissez-faire, etc.). The dotted line branchings below each main alternative indicate that there are usually sub-choices within each choice. If we went the "mass promotion" route, we would have options within that alternative such as newspaper, TV, radio or billboards.

**Step 5.** Among the alternative responses to your key factor, select as the action alternative, the one (or at most two) best combination of desirable and doable that is likely to be effective and realistically capable of implementation. Let's say we chose the "New sources" response

alternative in Figure 1, and within that, senior citizens, as a relatively new source of volunteers for our program.

**Step 6.** Formulate and begin a plan to implement the action alternative. In this case, we might be talking about the development of volunteer job descriptions and recruiting materials especially adapted to seniors, and also solidifying relations with a local clearinghouse for senior volunteers, etc.

**Step 7.** Recycling. Some of us have a tendency to spread ourselves too thin. We have therefore recommended dealing with one key factor at a time and one action alternative for that factor. However, after one such sequence is completed, or is well-in-hand, you can recycle the process, either by choosing another key factor (Steps 2,3) or another desirable, plus doable, response to the same key factor (Step 5).

## 2. Practice

Suggested group size is 3-5 each. Where participants are from different sites or settings, choose one participant's program or organization to use as practice. The exercise is to follow through the seven-step process, at least in outline form. Even this might take from one to two hours. To save time on Step 1, and you can depend heavily on the list of future factors given below. An even more drastic time-saver, though of less value for practicing the process, is to redo the volunteer shortage example in Figure 1, and to review or develop further the alternatives given there. Then go on to steps 5 and 6.

## 3. List of Possible Future Factors or Scenarios

**Reminder:** This list is neither definitive nor comprehensive. Add, subtract, or alter as you see fit. Also, remember that the factors are not listed in any particular order of importance.

- a. Shortage of volunteers in relation to demand for them. See Figure 1.
- b. Volunteering today can be seen as part of a larger whole, rather than standing by itself. Thus, the volunteer is seen as one who gives not only service, but also information, in-kind materials and facilities, money, advocacy support, ideas and input. Often, the same person contributes several of these things in the same package, but, in any case, they appear to be interrelated as something we might call "community resource development" or "community-based support systems." Accordingly, some people who once were called volunteer coordinators are now called community resource managers or have similar titles. This larger responsibility includes volunteers but is not restricted to them. Some people believe the careerist gains more status and respect in this role.
- c. Attention is being given to the importance of what volunteers do outside traditional agency or organizational settings; that is, settings in which they do not work primarily, or at all, with or for paid staff. Thus, some are beginning to focus more on the power that exists in the mainly or entirely volunteer group and the freelance/independent volunteer.
- d. A fundamental conflict appears to be articulating between philosophies of volunteerism which "use" or "control" volunteers, versus approaches which concentrate on empowering them. There is some belief too that many younger volunteers are increasingly aware of this difference, with a clear preference for being empowered rather than used.
- e. Pressure continues, especially from national associations, to make certification a high priority or necessity in qualifying as a careerist in the field of volunteer leadership. Foreseeably, this could either fail to persuade enough people to enter the field and thus not be a significant factor, or we could have an interesting transitional situation in which many volunteer coordinators were certified and many others not.

Ultimately, in this scenario, no uncertified person would be permitted to work in the field. There is also some advocacy today for putting more emphasis on certifying (accrediting) volunteer programs rather than individual leaders. Presumably, however, well-supported competent leadership would be one criterion in the program accreditation process.

- f. There is awareness that volunteers are being used by some as a justification for cutting fund allocations to human service and caregiving organizations and causes. Some feel this is unfair to volunteers who mainly want to see their presence as a strengthening force rather than an excuse for weakening the organization. There is also some belief that this "replacement" philosophy is one reason for staff discomfort with volunteers.
- g. Increasingly, people are deliberately using volunteer experience as a means to career exploration and qualifications.
- h. Current research solidly documents for the first time that volunteering is good for the volunteer medically as well as mentally. "Not volunteering is hazardous to your health."
- i. Expectations of volunteers get higher and higher (largely through our advocacy) and may be becoming too high. In this situation, both volunteers as individuals and volunteer programs could be seriously damaged because too much is expected of them. This perspective is frequent among well-intended people who are not experienced in the day-to-day management of volunteer programs.

On the other hand, among some "insiders" in volunteer leadership, there is a counter-trend towards more realism, if not actually pessimism, about what volunteers can or cannot do for an organization. At the onset of the modern resurgence of volunteerism some 30 years ago, claims for positive impact of volunteers approached the miraculous. Today, we're more likely to hear sober analyses of persistent staff resistance to volunteers; conflict among volunteers and with staff; concerns about liability and other legal dangers; how to deal with difficult volunteers; and even how to fire a volunteer.

- j. An increasing amount of unpaid community service is done, less by clear free choice, and more by prescription, out of obligation or other social pressure. Examples would be the increasing number of college interns; transitional volunteers (as prescribed by therapist); offenders in community service (alternative sentencing); rising young executives in corporations whose strategy includes acquiring a reputation for social responsibility; any situation in which community service is mandated as a condition of membership in a religious, civic, fraternal, or school group; youth service programs, etc. We also learned recently of a military base whose commandant requires all officers to perform some unpaid service (called "volunteering") in a neighboring community.

As of now, most volunteer coordinators seem to prefer complete integration of these "prescribed participants" and community volunteers in the same program. A significant minority, however, is concerned about this.

- k. For 20 years or more, there has been a trend to broaden the definition of volunteer to include "receiving some money". First, the notion of work-related expense reimbursement gained credence, and is almost universally accepted now. Later, it became more accepted that people could still be volunteers if they received "stipends" -- possibly covering a bit more than specific work-related expenses. Then, we had sub-minimum wage, as in the U.S. ACTION agency's Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion "volunteer" programs. Most recently, a city youth service program which pays minimum wage was described as a "volunteer" program because of the ". . . relatively low wages" paid to the youth.
- l. Some see a 30-year trend from major concentration on the impact of volunteers on clients, to more emphasis on the well-being of volunteers, to current emphasis on the well-being

of the volunteer coordinator herself/himself. What is the best balance? And if, in fact, we are right about concern moving progressively "inward", how much further can it go? (F), (G), (H), etc.

The most important trends of all are the ones you choose.

## B. Choicepoint Process

### 1. The Anticipation of Crossroads

The future is full of choices and challenges we cannot avoid and should not even try to avoid. While we cannot always choose the challenges the future will present, we can often choose how to respond to these challenges. The helpful futurist, therefore, produces something very much like a road map. Crossroads and forkings are clearly marked without telling the traveler which way he or she should turn at the crossroads. At the same time, the map does indicate consequences of taking one turn (mountains, dirt road) or another (valley, hardtop road). Just so, we recommend that futuring concentrate on forecasting the range of choices persons or organizations will be faced with rather than trying to foresee which choice they will actually take. The latter is a far more chancy prediction.

**Example 1.** If you are a career-committed volunteer coordinator without a college degree, it's a fairly good guess that, at some future time, you might confront a decision on whether to go back to school or not. However, if we were to try to predict exactly which school you'll attend and what subject you'll study, it would be a lot more difficult and even a bit presumptuous (the decision is yours, not ours). In any case, anticipating the choicepoint is usually enough to ensure that a better decision will be made when the crossroads is finally reached.

**Example 2.** As a volunteer coordinator, it's fairly likely that someday you'll be faced with a decision on whether to stay in the volunteer leadership field or not, with one option being another job having a various mix of comparative advantages and disadvantages in regard to status, fulfillment, and remuneration. Forecasting exactly what that other job option(s) will be is far more uncertain.

**Example 3.** For a viable group composed entirely of volunteers, one probable prediction is that, if they thrive and grow, they will someday have some extra money to invest in coordination and management of their group. Their choices at that point can be prophesied fairly well: (a) hire a part-time staff person; (b) retain on contract an organization specializing in secretarial (organizational management) services; (c) stop or reverse growth to the point where neither of the above will be needed and use the money for other things; (d) etc. Once again, foreseeing the crossroads will help the organization prepare for it by considering pros and cons of each possible choice. But, attempting to predict now, which of these three or more options they will actually take, is far more uncertain and not very helpful because the information and other conditions of good decision-making haven't crystallized yet.

**Example 4.** Finally, it can be predicted that many volunteer leaders will continue to face a broad range of choices in response to the difficulty of recruiting enough good volunteers for their program or organization. A layout of alternative responses is given in Figure 1 of the preceding Future Factors exercise. The difference between this exercise and that one is a matter of degree; here, we're talking more about choices with which the person or organization will be confronted willy-nilly, rather than alternatives they deliberately develop.

## 2. Predicting When We'll Reach the Crossroads

The next task is to predict as reliably as possible when a decision point is likely to crystallize. Sometimes these choices can be postponed rather far in the future. An example is the decision (barring untimely accident) of whether to be an organ donor upon your death. Similarly, middle class parents may invest in a college savings plan or policy on the first day of their child's life (or even before). What they are predicting is that some 18 or so years hence, their child will have the choice of going to college or not and which college. Further, that choice will be somewhat easier or better, given the assurance of appropriate financial resources.

I nevertheless believe that many crucial individual or program choices can't be clearly foreseen more than two or three years in advance, if indeed that long. An example would be the choice to stay in your present role or job, or move to another one (see Example 2, preceding). There are just too many factors and conditions affecting such situations to make them more than foggy crossroads until we get quite close in time to them.

Once you do see the crossroads in the foreground, there are a number of things you can usually do to help ensure better decisions upon actually reaching the crossroad. These "choicepoint functions" are really a form of futuring because they use the present to prepare for better coping with an anticipated future.

The following outline of such crossroad functions is oriented towards an individual at a career decision point. The process can be adapted to other kinds of decisions and deciders, e.g., organizations.

## 3. Crossroad Competencies (Career Choicepoint Example)

Here are some of the things you can do in the present to anticipate a future career choicepoint:

- a. Self-Evaluation. Use whatever suits you to take stock: Bolles' What Color is your Parachute?, Edgar Schein's "Anchors," Yellowfire Press' "Building Work That Satisfies: The Window of Work", etc. The goal is to visualize what fits you, rather than try to fit whatever happens to be available.
- b. Exploration. Try to test out possible choices experientially. Volunteering is one great way to do this.
- c. Affirmation. It can be a scary time and one in which affirmation is especially valuable. This may be part of the reason people at choicepoints go back to get degrees ("University X says I'm okay"), certification (AVA says I'm O.K.), etc. But mainly your friends, family, and other networks are needed for support at this time. One possible paradox is to get so much affirmation from where you are now that it's even harder to move somewhere else.
- d. Visualization. Try to visualize an ideal work situation and conditions somewhere several years from now. Variations include going beyond the pure ideal to 1) paradise with penalties, i.e., also visualizing some possible problems or flaws in your work-utopia, and 2) once you have the visualization, work backward from it with the challenge of "what has to begin happening now and in the intervening years for this ideal to come to pass?" (See exercise on The Freedom to Dream.)
- e. Levitation. Try to get away from it all to see yourself and your situation from afar, in perspective, stripped of daily distractions. Some people do this geographically -- take a trip to a nice place (if you can afford it). But deliberate distancing can also be accomplished psychologically via meditation, reflection, retreats, and think tanks.

- f. **Accumulation.** You may have to behave something like a squirrel in the fall: save things up for support during the winter of change, the uncertainties that may attach to getting established in a new field. What is accumulated may be money and other material resources for the transition, but we may also less visibly store up psychological and spiritual resources.
- g. **Temporization (Hedging).** Some strategies are evolving, particularly among the new woman entrepreneur, for passing over bridges without burning them; that is, exploring new options without totally abandoning the security of a present job. One strategy is to start a part-time consulting or other business while remaining full- or mainly full-time in your present salaried position. If the new business goes well and stabilizes, you can then think about pulling out of your present job.

These are things an individual can do to take more control of what is happening. But other things, such as the actual "creation" of new alternatives, are often things groups must do together -- system change.

### C. **The Opportunity-Threat Strategy**

Opportunities and threats are two sides of the same coin. They are also a good way to ease into the futuring process; while the opportunities and dangers exist in the present, you must be future-oriented in dealing with them to capitalize on the one and avoid the other. That is the purpose of the present strategy.

Example: Until recently, the "Volunteers for the Outdoors" group was composed entirely of volunteers: ten board members who also functioned as "volunteer staff", about 20 other regularly-serving volunteers, and much larger numbers who came in occasionally for special projects. These projects include construction and maintenance of park trails and campsites, building bridges in park land, advocacy and education for increased support, and appreciation of parks. This is a nonprofit tax-exempt organization founded eight years ago. They have just hired their first paid staff person, who will work half-time in a small donated office, with minimal office equipment.

1. Here are examples of opportunities with counterpart threats.

	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS/DANGERS
A.	The staff person will be able to provide much more continuity and coordination of activities.	The board will feel that the staff person is usurping its hands-on policy role and is interfering with members' micro-management of the organization.
B.	The staff person will be able to take over many of the tasks it's hard to get volunteers to accept (those that burn them out).	Board and other volunteer staff will dump too much, too rapidly and indiscriminately on the staff person, and burn him or her out. The board members, no longer hooked in by having concrete tasks to perform, will lose interest in the organization.
C.	With a paid staff person and an office, we should be able to attract more grants and other money.	Organization might become too oriented to money as the only way of doing things, and start doing things "because-there-is-money-for-it", regardless of relation to original mission; and/or insofar as more money comes in and is invested in more staff, alienation and conflict between staff and volunteers will increase. Over the long term, the role of volunteers may seriously diminish towards tokenism.

2. The next step is to devise strategies for maximizing opportunity and minimizing dangers in the future for the "matched pairs" described above. Examples might be:
  - a. Raise awareness that the kinds of tensions described above are a natural dynamic and consequence to be expected in situations of this sort, rather than necessarily a conflict of personalities, or an imputation of incompetence or bad faith on either side.
  - b. Be very careful about relative role definitions and job descriptions of both staff and board, not only to negotiate these before hiring the new staff person, but continually and openly to re-negotiate them during their first 6-12 months in the new situation.
  - c. Become very conscious of and skilled at processes for delegating both ways: from the staff to board or other "volunteer staff", as well as from board to staff.
  - d. Consider an evolution of board composition which, while maintaining the precious connection with the founders, nevertheless places more emphasis on members who are comfortable working with staffed organizations and experienced in macro- (rather than micro-) management.
  
3. Another example of opportunity/threat analysis is incorporated later in this section in the **General-Purpose Combination Process**. Using their numbering system, the key sequences are:
 

Step 1: Decide unit of study -- individual, program, organization, community, etc.

Step 3: Describe clearly the present situation.

Step 4: Describe main opportunities in the present situation that can be capitalized on in the future.

Step 6: Visualize what it would be like to capitalize on these opportunities.

Step 5: Describe main threats or dangers in the present situation.

Step 7: Visualize what it would be like in the worst case scenario where these dangers came true.
  
4. Now, in pairs or small groups, participants can go through the process for their own program or other unit of study. As in the examples:
  - a. Provide baseline background on unit of study and situation.
  - b. Identify paired dangers and opportunities.
  - c. Develop strategies to maximize opportunities and minimize dangers.

Each participant does his or her own work with the other(s) in the group acting as consultants.

#### **D. Dubious Demographics and Other Hazards**

It shouldn't be as easy as it is to be both boring and inaccurate, but many predictions manage it. I think one reason is over-reliance on numbers per se, with neglect of the qualitative. Faced with the uncertainties of prophecy, people can hardly be blamed for savoring solid statistics. How many or how much of X there is now, multiplied by the current rate of change in X, gives a precise numerical prediction of X in the future.

Example\*: Today, 15% of the population is over 60 years of age. This segment of the population is

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\*Here and throughout, numbers are "for instance," rounded, squared and for purposes of illustration only.

increasing at the rate of 1% every two years. Therefore, in the year 2000 we can expect about 20% of the population to be over 60 years of age. We'd better get ready with more volunteer jobs attractive to seniors, and ultimately, more volunteer programs serving the elderly. Though this prediction could be on-target, there are at least two reasons why it probably isn't: Rate Change and Trait Change.

**Rate Change.** I believe that current rates of change (1% every two years, in our example) rarely remain constant. If the rate of increase of women entering the workforce in the mid-1970s had held constant, approximately 110% of women would be in the workforce today. What this tells us is that a rate is likely to decelerate when it approaches the maximum attainable value or "supply" for that factor (i.e., all the women there are).

Other decelerations in rate of change have less straightforward kinds of explanation. Happy as I'd be to see more Hispanic people in our communities, I disbelieve predictions that Hispanics will necessarily be the largest minority group in the U. S. by about year 2010. That prediction assumes that today's and yesterday's birthrate among Hispanics will remain the same relatively high one. To the contrary, my young Hispanic friends tell me they intend to love their children as much as their parents loved them (which is a lot), but have fewer children.

My sense is that deceleration of a rate tends to happen when a trend matures, insofar as what is happening has been happening for quite a while. Conversely, early on in a trend, acceleration seems to be more likely. I monitored the return of volunteers to the criminal justice system in the early and mid-1960s. In that first blush of enthusiasm, the rate was not only large, but accelerating every year until it leveled off in the 1970s.

Therefore, my first rough rule of thumb for dubious demographics is to look for a current high rate of change to decline (decelerate) over time and to look for a current low rate of change to accelerate, if the trend appears to be backed by enthusiasm and perceived relevance (e.g., in 1989, purchase of FAX machines). Again, there's more possibility of acceleration early in a trend with leveling off and deceleration more likely as we get closer to the end of the trend or the total supply of a phenomenon (e.g., the total number of women who could be in the workforce) or the total possible number of volunteers in a community or a country.

In summary, always suspect the likelihood of the linear in a trend. And, expect the curvilinear.

If this is more subtle than naive prophets prefer, so be it. Indeed, it seems to me that the best things in life are curvilinear, for example, the lovely rounded contours of northern New Mexico architecture.

A second major caution about lazily linear extrapolations of rate is that a rate may sometimes not only decelerate; it may also actually reverse. I call this the "rubber-band" effect. The more powerfully a factor pushes forward to stretch reality in its direction of impact, the more likely it is to snap back. Example: The drastic 1970s jump in oil prices stimulated conservation, the building of cars with better gas mileage, increased oil exploration, etc., all of which acted to drive oil prices back down. Within volunteerism, fears in the early 1980s about liability deterring board membership may have a similar rubber-band effect. Those fears, and the reality behind them, have led to legislation tending to remove the reality. Finally, degradation of the environment seems to be reaching the point where enough people are alarmed enough to mobilize a decisive rescue effort -- one hopes before it is too late. Similarly, the plight of the homeless seems to have gotten bad enough, and visible enough, so that we might just possibly do something to mitigate the tragedy.

The examples thus far are of a "bad" or dangerous factor "inoculating" against itself. The opposite is equally possible as when receipt of a large contract or grant encourages complacency, waste and bureaucracy in an agency, creating a situation which eventually results in loss of the grant and agency credibility along with it. Within volunteerism, the rather rapid advent of more and more

"free help" via mandated or heavily pressured community service, welcomed by many volunteer people today, could end up half killing genuine volunteering.

A second rough rule of thumb, therefore, is: Be aware of backlash. Understand that certain factors (especially, powerful factors) can provoke counter-reactions which not only slow their rate of impact, but also actually reverse it.

If an excursion into philosophy is permissible at this point, it does seem as if the future doesn't always imply change; it may only come around again to the present in another guise. In T. S. Elliot's haunting lines: "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." Possibly, some futures are only other cycles of the present, changed only in our having a little more understanding this time around, or at least a little more realism. One wonders what more or better we will do this time around if some historians are right that social activism occurs in 30-year cycles in America, the 1960s about to "comeback" in the 1990s. What you make of cyclical prediction of this type may depend in part on your cultural background. Thus, some of us (myself included) are uptight about time, and some ethnic-cultural groups are not. For me, if you miss the bus, you have (awful!) missed the bus forever; it will never be back again. For others, if you miss the bus, you need only remember that the bus is coming around again, sometime. The difference is between linear and curvilinear or cyclical thinking.

At this point, wearying of philosophy, we can do this exercise: "Predicting" from the past to the present, try to get examples of rates of change in factors which were 1) linear, i.e., the rate has stayed pretty much the same; 2) curvilinear (examples of both acceleration and deceleration); and 3) self-reversing or "rubber-band effect" factors.

Further discussion might attempt to develop some guidelines on what kinds of phenomena are more likely to be linear in rate, as distinct from curvilinear and self-reversing. This is a challenging task.

Trait Change. Uncertainty piled on uncertainty. Even if you correctly gauge how many of X there will be in times to come, you can't be sure X will behave the same way in the future, want the same things, or respond in the same way to your strategies. As noted earlier, the older person of today behaves differently from the older person of yesterday, shows some important differences in health, style, outlook, etc. So even if we're right in guessing a higher percentage of older people 20 years hence, we're likely to be wrong if we think that merely implies "more of the same" in programs involving older people either as volunteers or as clients. The same trap is easily sprung in assuming that virtually any kind of person will be/act/want the same tomorrow as today, be they black people, youth, women, or volunteer coordinators. The critical consideration here is the inclusion of qualitative as well as quantitative change.

The case is even more dramatic when the unit being counted isn't even demographically identical, e.g., "volunteers". The volunteer of tomorrow seems, by present trends, more likely to be (a) paid and (b) under some kind of tangible social pressure to perform community service, rather than "freely" choose it. (See Trend J in "Future Factor Analysis.") A similar kind of qualitative change in the unit being counted can occur at the organizational level. We may hope and predict that there will be more volunteer centers and professional associations (DOVIAs) in the future. But if history is any judge, it is unlikely that such organizations will be doing the same things and needing the same things in years to come.

Finally, functions too can undergo trait change. Those who foresee more and better management in the future of volunteerism must factor into that prediction important current evolution in the nature of management itself.

Exercises (at least 30-45 minutes)

1. In small groups, identify as many examples as you can of individual or organizational trait changes which have occurred from the past to the present and might continue such qualitative change in the future. All the better, if these trait changes can be related to volunteerism.
2. Take an actual prediction made from the past to the present, or from the present to the future, and analyze it for rate and trait change either properly taken account of, or ignored at peril. Once again, it's helpful if this prediction has something to do with volunteerism.

**E. The Freedom to Dream: Visualizing Volunteer Futures**1. Frightened Versus Affirmative Goal-Setting

Some people never dare to dream anything they're not sure beforehand of achieving. This gets them nice, safe sanitized goals guaranteed not to stimulate nor stretch.

Standard problem-solving habits reinforce such caution. Ideally, we set a desirable goal and then worry about how to achieve it. In practice, however, worries about how to achieve it often "leak" over into the goal-setting process, prematurely diminishing the scope and imaginativeness of targets. Some people are very resourceful in applying this "philosophy" to your goals as well as theirs; they can always come up with ten reasons why your idea won't work. They're adept at negative prediction, i.e., explaining why anything desirable is also impossible.

By contrast, our policy will be affirmation first, as purely as possible. Only after this, will we concern ourselves with implementation. We seek a process which bypasses implementary anxieties in setting goals.

2. Illustrations

- a. The year -- 1960. Landing people on the moon within a decade was strictly for the comic books. Realists, if they thought about it at all, could give lots of reasons why it could never happen. Probably, U. S. President John F. Kennedy was pretty well aware of these implementary implausibilities. Yet, he chose to affirm as a national goal that the U. S. would have a man on the moon within ten years. That declaration was itself a major resource in making the dream happen; it galvanized energy and expertise as timidity never could.
- b. Down-to-earth parallels are not hard to find. How many of us never asked that celebrity to participate in our conference or recognition event because we are sure he or she will never come? Next thing we know, someone whose event is no more important than ours, has the "nerve" to ask and the person accepts! The "asker" visualized the ideal, then leapfrogged normal problem-solving restraints to "go for it". This is also known as the chutzpah factor.
- c. Another example: If you can't (or won't) imagine yourself as a higher-level manager/supervisor, chances are you're never going to get there. Imagining yourself there is no guarantee of success, but it is a first step.

Maybe "wishing won't make it so", but it's a start sometimes. And never daring to dream only gets you safe mediocrity. In the longer-run it virtually guarantees failure against the only standard that really matters -- becoming all you can be and doing all you might do.

3. Simulations (about 60 minutes each)

**Exercise A.** Ask participants to visualize **The Best of All Possible Worlds for You at Work, the Ideal Situation in All Respects**. Include feelings as well as facts. Put it down as it comes to you without much analysis. In particular, do not worry a lot about how you got to this ideal situation; just think what it's like to be there; leapfrog problems, and work alone. Take about 15 minutes. You can write it out fully, outline it, or just keep it in your head -- whichever suits you. And if drawing a picture helps you visualize and express your dream, that's fine too.

Some people will seek more structure: How far in the future is this? Am I still with my present organization? Should I take into account the possibility of moving to another community?

Encourage people to answer such questions for themselves by letting the vision emerge freely first, then seeing what structure is implied. To the time-frame kind of question, you might say, "Everyone's style is different, of course, but we'd prefer you to let your best-of-all-possible-work-worlds take shape first unlimited by strict time limits. Once this is done, it should become fairly clear approximately how far in the future this is likely to be."

This laissez-faire approach is hard for some people to handle. Many of these are the very people who most need some lifting of limits in their imagination. Only ask participants to keep structure to the minimum they can tolerate. As for facilitator-imposed structure from the outside, the starting question itself, with approximate time limit, is usually the main structure. I sometimes also, with concurrence of participants, encourage a mood of reflection and quiet, by asking people to close their eyes and otherwise get centered before responding to the question. Someone familiar with meditation is good for leading this process.

Here is a composite example of a typical "feasible fantasy".

"The time I'm allowed to spend on the volunteer program has dramatically increased to 90%, and I have a wonderfully efficient and pleasant executive assistant. Requests for volunteers from staff have doubled, running slightly ahead of my ability to fill them. Even better, staff are coming in with well-thought-out volunteer job requests, realistic, often innovative, and responsible. Staff are clearly taking their obligation to supervise volunteers far more seriously, and they do it much more skillfully. Among other things, this has resulted in a much lower volunteer dropout rate. The help and support volunteers give staff is also credited with easing the staff burnout problem we've had in previous years.

I'm at a middle management level and have had several salary increases with a substantial boost in my benefits package as well, especially medical. I report to a person who encourages and appreciates my creativity and is generous in giving me credit for what I do (she doesn't need to get the credit herself). I am also consistently "in the loop" on executive staff decisions concerning overall goals and mission of the agency. Among other things, I am the expert on how community involvement can contribute to any purpose or goal of the agency, current or contemplated.

Professional development funds are now at a level where I can attend at least one national and several in-state (or province) conferences a year. There's also plenty of financial support for recognition items and events for volunteers.

I enjoy non-work activities as much as ever, maybe more, but there are still lots of days when I can hardly wait to get to work in the morning -- it's such a fulfilling place to be. Even better, I bring happiness home with me at night; friends and family say they've never seen me looking or feeling better."

#### 4. Implementation

##### a. What do we do with such dreams?

1. Ask participants to get in pairs or small groups.
2. Concentrate on one person's visualization before moving on to the next.
3. Pressure no one to share material they consider too private.
4. Allow at least 45 minutes (or longer) for the exercise.
5. Decide which of the three elementary approaches below, or which combination of them, is best for each visualization. Then, as time permits, follow out implications in more detail.

##### b. The three approaches to "doing something about the dream" are:

Type 1. Do Nothing. This confronts the common assumption that we always have to do something about an idea, and do it immediately. Instead, we might just leave it alone and let it ripen like early-picked fruit, or mellow like new-made wine. This is very hard for some people, but is nevertheless a viable option. My dream of building VOLUNTAS (usually an attachment with this paper) allowed this vision of a retreat and renewal center for volunteers and their leaders to ripen several years before starting to do anything about it. There may be some analogy to dreams of making a concert pianist of a promising three-year-old. The potential may be there, but you probably have to wait awhile for readiness to respond to intensive cultivation of the talent. Besides, children must also be given time to form their own vision of whom they'd like to be.

Type 2. Walk Backwards From Then to Now. This classic approach to implementation would first of all try to get the person to commit to exactly when the ideal situation is to be reached. Then, work backwards in time. For example, if this is to happen by 1995, what needs to start happening today? Next month? Next year?

Type 3. Have A "Pep Rally". Here, the group may begin by gently asking for a bit more description on certain parts of the ideal visualization to help the visualizer flesh it out. But most of all, the group would shower the dreamer with all kinds of reasons why and how the dream will come true. No critique allowed. We're more into morale than mechanics here.

Exercise B. (There is no obligation to do both exercises or to do them in order if you decide to do both.) Ask participants to visualize **The Thing(s) I'd Most Like To See Happen In My Organization/Program/Cause**. This is broader than the previous visualization because probably it crucially involves other people and resources besides the participant. Otherwise, the process is essentially the same, with the three elementary options, etc. Here, however, the third "pep rally" option might also be called "catchfire", in that you hope for even more than having people cheer you on from the sidelines, so to speak. Here, you need active co-participation in making a shared dream come true. Prospects for implementation depend importantly on the ability of the idea to excite people. Once that happens, they will help you find ways to make it happen, in ways you might never have thought of yourself. They will become co-owners of the dream and therefore co-implementers.

The attached report on the VOLUNTAS project illustrates this, indicating some of the people with whom the concept caught fire, and who therefore took important initiatives to help make it happen. Many of these ideas, e.g., "tithing" of training fees, "benefit workshops", the time capsule, taking a desktop display around to conferences, are implementations I never thought of as one of the originators of the idea. I therefore think this catchfire approach deserves more respect than it has had, heretofore.

VOLUNTAS also illustrates the do-nothing approach. As previously noted, I let the idea "steep" for several years without doing anything about it, except talking with friends and colleagues now and then. There's no way I know of to "prove" that such incubation helped. I only sense strongly that during this fallow period, the idea fleshed out and matured through largely unconscious elaboration, the checking out of options, etc.

As for the walk backwards approach, many colleagues were sincerely concerned that we mainly put the VOLUNTAS idea out there for catchfire at first, without having detailed how-to plans in place. These are steadily evolving, however. See, for example, the grass roots fundraising and grantwriting plans described in the attached brochure. My belief is that the do nothing and catchfire approaches ultimately contributed to implementary (Type 2) development rather than conflicted with it.

## F. Time Machine: Seeing Ourselves as Somebody's Ancestor

### 1. Background, Purpose

A key strategy in futuring is the ability to visualize time to come. Here we reverse to imagine how time to come might visualize us. This time capsule role play is subtler than our other exercises. Still, the danger of losing one's sense of reality altogether is offset somewhat by circumstances in the real world: There is in fact a time capsule on volunteerism, planned for sealing during the 1990 Thanksgiving season. An announcement of this VOLUNTAS time capsule is attached here; facilitators may even want to add further versimilitude by incorporating in the present exercise, actual time capsule developments to date.

### 2. The Process

- a. Decide timespan. Will the capsule be opened ten years hence? Thirty years? Fifty years? A century, or more? Experience thus far suggests a range between ten and seventy-five years. Be as flexible as you can; it is even possible to alter the timespan, by consensus, once you're into the role play. We'll use a 50-year span for our example.
- b. Divide into two groups of 3-5 people each: The people of the present and the people of the future. Groups can be identified by their year of existence: In a 50-year timespan, these are the 1990 group and the 2040 group. The latter group is composed of historians/archaeologists, and can be so called.

Scene I. 1990, Preparing the Time Capsule. The 1990 group "plays themselves" to prepare their time capsule messages, exactly as asked in the attached VOLUNTAS time capsule flyer. We suggest each group member first answer the questions independently for her/his own program or organization or personal involvement. Then the group can try to reach consensus responses for volunteerism in general. Allow 45-60 minutes, at least.

Scene Ia. While the 1990 group is in Scene I, the 2040s are discussing what it's like to live in 2040, the advantages, issues and concerns of their time. Try to achieve some consensus on these matters, though this need not be perfect; even in real life, the people actually living in an age do not perfectly agree on what their time is like.

The 2040 group might possibly consider detailing one or two of their number as nonparticipant observers of the 1990s in Scene I. As you like, but we recommend against this; the impact of the role play depends significantly on lack of influence and interaction between the two groups, prior to the next scene. Let there be some surprises.

Scene II. (45-60 minutes) The year 2040. Quite by accident, our 2040 group -- the historians of the future -- discover the time capsule and carefully open it to find the messages sent by the 1990s.

During this entire scene, the 1990s are present (very definitely) as nonparticipant ghosts -- watching only from outside the circle.

The 2040s spend perhaps 10-15 minutes studying the 1990 messages and then begin discussion around the following benchmarks (as citizens of 2040, remember). Concentrate discussion on volunteerism, although wider concerns of the 2040 society will, of course, have to be brought in.

- a. We don't understand don't even know what they're talking about, though we have some theories about what they meant. (Can be good argument here between individuals in the 2040 group.)
- b. We do feel we understand and are able to identify:
  1. Which of their predictions about us are accurate versus inaccurate.
  2. What portions of their advice to us are relevant or useful versus irrelevant, useless, or even damaging.
  3. Some good things they had in 1990 that we have lost or are in danger of losing.
  4. Some things in 1990 that we've improved upon since their day.

Scene III. In 2040  $\frac{1}{2}$ . A mad scientist task force (the facilitator?) invents a time machine. We now have the choice of either having the 2040 group visit 1990 or vice versa. We suggest the latter because our interest is after all in the future. This being done, the 2040s report their conclusions to the visiting 1990s, after which the 1990s take the initiative in querying the 2040s on their conclusions. Why didn't you understand us when we said that? Why was our prediction inaccurate or our advice good in such and such a case? Why do you feel you've improved on this and lost something on that?

From all this, a picture of 2040 should emerge, and even more, the kind of temporal tensions we might expect over the intervening years; also, what we should do to prevent decline and encourage progress between 1990 and 2040.

## **G. General-Purpose Combination Process**

This nine-point process combines some of the best features of two previously discussed strategies: Opportunity-Threat (C) and Visualization of Volunteer Futures (E). It is a good way to make it possible for participants to leave a workshop session with a definite prediction and planning product.

Try not to rush people as they work their way through the process since careful thought is what we encourage here. But it is quite possible that participants can complete the nine steps, at least in outline, within two hours -- somewhat less if they have already practiced the two component strategies.

At workshops, we've had good luck with people working in pairs or triads. Each person does her or his own prediction with the other people as their consultants. Most participants prefer to work with people in a similar field, e.g., youth, but some prefer to have partners who are in very different fields. Some extra creative spark and perspective is possible in such a situation. Let participants decide this for themselves once the pros and cons have been indicated.

Remind participants that when they conduct this process "for real" back home, it should be fully participative, representing stakeholders, plus impacting and impacted-on people in their program, organization, or worklife.

Since groups definitely tend to work at different paces, it can be awkward to interrupt the process at various points to have dyads and triads share with one another as a total group. We have, however, had success

with reserving a 15-30 minute period at the end of the process for groups to share as far as they have come with the process. Try to avoid making groups feel a sense of failure if they happen not to have fully completed the nine steps.

Another danger of pushing too hard for total synchronization of all dyads/triads is that the nine-step process, though appearing to be linear, really is not. For example, after visualizing the ideal (Step 6), a participant may see that the unit of study or time frame (Steps 1 and 2) needs to be adjusted. Encourage people to think of the nine steps as positioned around a circle, with crossovers within the circle permissible and even desirable.

1. **Determine Scope (Unit of Study).** Options include oneself or any other individual; a volunteer program; an entire organization or group; an association or coalition; a neighborhood, community, nation, world.

**Example:** Our unit of study will be the "Phone Friend" program in which latchkey children, 8-12 years old, are matched with senior citizen volunteers whom the children are to call when they get home.

2. **Select Appropriate Time Frame.** We suggest between six months and three years in the future.

**Example:** Two years from today for our "Phone Friend" program.

3. **Clearly Describe Present Situation.** All parties should be able to agree generally on this description. Be sure to include impressions as well as numbers.

**Example:** The Phone Friend volunteer program is in very early stages. A half time volunteer coordinator has just been hired, and we have gathered information on several other similar programs elsewhere. A few seniors have expressed tentative interest in volunteering for the program, and a few latchkey parents have been approached to see if they might be interested in having their children in such a program (results inconclusive on this).

4. **Identify Two To Four Main Opportunities That Might Be Capitalized On Within The Time Frame You Have Chosen.**

**Example:**

- Appears to be a strong early interest in the program from several important sectors of the community, notably the media and the school system, but also city government and religious groups.
- It looks as if there are a large number of homebound seniors not being tapped by other programs, and these seniors might be just right as volunteers for the Phone Friend program.

5. **Identify Two To Four Main Threats Or Challenges You Expect To Have To Deal With Within The Time Frame You Have Chosen.**

**Example:**

- Parents might be reluctant to permit their children to be in the program, via embarrassment about the latchkey situation, mistrust, etc.
- There is a general shortage of volunteers in our community.
- We want to limit the child-senior relationship to phone contacts, preferably only those initiated by the child. We have real concern, however, that the relationship might prove difficult to limit/manage and instead grow to involve other potentially threatening aspects.
- There will be a serious general recession affecting our community.

Notes on Steps 4 and 5: Some factors might actually be both threats and opportunities, e.g., growth of the child-senior relationship beyond program bounds might have beneficial effects, while strong media interest in the program might backfire if the program runs into problems. For now, though, the important thing is how you perceive the factor, mainly as threat or opportunity.

6. Visualize The Ideal\* Situation At The End Of The Time Frame Selected For Your Unit of Study. It may help to build your practical paradise around the assumption that all your main opportunities have been capitalized on and all your threats nullified (Steps 4 and 5). However, there may be other features of Utopia besides these. Note also: Your ideal should include impressions, not just statistics. Finally, try to stick primarily with what has happened rather than how it happened.

Example: The program has lots of children registered, in good balance with the number of appropriate seniors available to volunteer (about 75 matches). We have a full-time volunteer coordinator now, with part-time administrative support. We're getting very favorable publicity, particularly on our use of homebound seniors as volunteers. The school system has been extremely helpful in identifying latchkey children and encouraging parents to register them in the program; parents show increasing confidence in referring their children. We can tell a number of positive stories about the program and don't have to hide any bad ones. Especially nice have been some spinoffs in general awareness of the plight of latchkey children and their parents, leading to such things as advocacy for more day care and flexible hours for working parents, etc.

7. Visualize The Disaster Or "Worst Case" Scenario\*, The Least Desirable Way Things Might Turn Out By The End Of The Chosen Time Frame. This is essentially the opposite of visualizing the ideal; here, opportunities are not capitalized on and threats are realized, plus other horrors. Think of this as Murphy's Law: Whatever can go wrong, has. And please note: the worst possible situation is not necessarily the end of your program. It might be a somehow surviving program which should be put out of its misery, but no one has the guts or ability to do so.

Example: There have been several bad incidents. In one, a child's parents persuaded a low-income senior volunteer to lend them money and never returned it. In another, a senior was guilty of a serious breach of confidentiality regarding her latchkey child. This has led to very bad publicity in the media, which affects the host organization as well as the Phone Friend program itself. Parents are reluctant to refer their children (there are only 13 in the program) and we are also getting flack from people who have volunteered but have been waiting a long time for assignment. To top it all, our community has been hard hit by a recession. With higher unemployment, more parents (not by choice) are home and there are fewer latchkey children. At the same time, funds for the program are scarce and a cut-off has been threatened. Etc. . . .

8. Choose One Or More Opportunities And/Or One Or More Threats (Steps 4,5) Which Are (1) most likely within your capability to do something about and (2) that you can begin work on immediately.
9. Lay Out An Action Plan To Deal With These Factors as per the section on opportunity-threat strategy and Future Factor analysis.

\*These are the best and worst possible scenarios from your viewpoint. Your "good" might be someone else's "bad", and vice versa. Here we are only concerned with how it is for you.

## FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

# VOLUNTAS

## A MESSAGE FOR THE FUTURE—THE VOLUNTAS TIME CAPSULE

1970... 1980... 1990 soon—the turn of each decade produces a flurry of futuring in volunteerism. As we continue to seek messages from the years to come, the VOLUNTAS time capsule will also send our message to the future of volunteerism.

The time capsule will be sealed during the 1990 Thanksgiving season and opened sixty years later in the year 2050... by volunteers, we hope!

Though this is surely an enterprise of the spirit, it has a very practical side as well. Ironically, attempting to foresee the future is the best way to understand the present, because that is the only solid basis we have in forecasting. More than that, our vision of times to come profoundly influences the present and enriches it. As José Ortega y Gasset put it: "Life is a series of collisions with the future; it is not a sum of what we have been, but what we yearn to be." The VOLUNTAS time capsule will help us focus our yearning and begin to do something about it; it will be one instrument through which, as Gregory Baum said, we will "... create our own future"

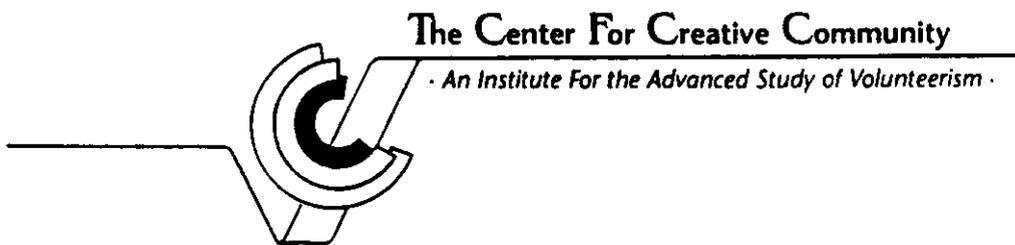
Many time capsules are set for hundreds or thousands of years hence. Why only sixty years for us? First of all, the rapid pace of development of modern volunteerism suggests it might change out of all recognition over centuries. Secondly, over "only" six decades, our special preservation arrangements will virtually assure arrival of documents and artifacts in excellent condition. Finally, this is a time span we can relate to on a human scale.

Some younger people invited to the 1990 launching, may still be alive in 2050 for the opening! The rest of us can visualize our children there, or their children...

Our time-traveler will be about the size of a steamer trunk. It will probably be incorporated in the cornerstone of VOLUNTAS, though another possible site is in the ground beneath the central "reflection well" or kiva.

The core of capsule content will be 150-200 messages from individuals, associations (e.g. DOVIAs), or organizations involved in volunteerism. Frontline volunteers will definitely be represented along with people who have a career or other serious interest in leadership of volunteers, e.g. volunteer coordinators, and consultants, clergy and lay leadership in church temple and synagogue; self-help and service club leaders, etc. Each person or organization will receive paper specially treated for preservation. Approximately 500 words will be allotted to speak to the following points:

- Identification of self and volunteer program, perhaps also the name and address of children and grandchildren to be notified at capsule opening
- Good things you see about volunteering today in your program or organization, and in general.
- Challenges, problems, things that need improving in volunteerism today
- Your prediction of what 2050 will be like as far as volunteering is concerned
- Your message to the future: advice, encouragement, cautions, or a greeting.



## **SHAPES AND SCENARIOS IN THE FUTURE OF VOLUNTEERISM: FORECASTING AND CREATING YOUR OWN FUTURE\***

A discussion outline Prepared by Ivan H. Scheier, The Center for Creative Community, P. O. Box 2427, Santa Fe, NM 87504.

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This outline is not meant to stand alone. It is meant to be accompanied by a workshop or a publication of the same title, and preferably both. The purpose is to provide an introductory orientation to the futuring process and tools for doing your own futuring for yourself or for your program or organization.

**Futuring** is an attempt to predict trends and events that haven't occurred yet. Usually, it also involves attempts to exert some control over these future events.

**Reasons for futuring** include sheer curiosity; a chance to escape the frustrations of the present (hope); the pressure it puts on us to understand the present better; the promise of being able to exert at least some small control over your own destiny (in which futuring relates to long-range planning); and a recognition of the positive way in which the future can influence us.

**Paradoxes in Predicting the Future** include:

1. Just making a prediction tends to change it.
2. The "easiest" predictions are often the best (most accurate) because they use shorter time frames, based on well established repeated sequences in the past, or predict choices rather than which choice will be taken.
3. "Back-casting" is the best preparation for forecasting. If you can't understand your past, it's unlikely you'll be able to understand your future. (Includes checking predictions made in the past).
4. The best way to predict the future is also the worst. While history is the best basis for predicting the future, the past is unlikely to influence the future in the same way as it influences present. We must beware linear extrapolation and other hazards.
5. The assumptions that served so well in the past may be the greatest barriers to imaginative visualizing of positive futures.

**Pitfalls in prediction** include being clear and consistent on what you are predicting about (unit of study)/acting as if what you are predicting about is unconnected to the rest of the world (importance of environmental factors), failing to recognize that your unit of study can act upon the environment as well as be acted on by it, flirting with fantasy by working with overly far-futures, and wishful thinking.

**Seven Strategies for the Do-It-Yourself Futurist**

- A. **FUTURE FACTOR ANALYSIS.** Brainstorm trends and realistic responses.
- B. **CHOICEPOINT PROCESS.** Anticipate crossroads; practice good choosing.
- C. **OPPORTUNITY-THREAT STRATEGY.** Identification and pro-action preparation.
- D. **DUBIOUS DEMOGRAPHICS AND OTHER HAZARDS.** Rate change, Trait change, etc.
- E. **THE FREEDOM TO DREAM.** Visualize ideal and disaster scenarios.
- F. **TIME MACHINE: SEEING YOURSELF AS YOUR OWN ANCESTOR.**
- G. **GENERAL-PURPOSE COMBINATION PROCESS** for futuring in volunteerism.

\*Publication is \$6, plus \$3 handling and mailing, from the Center.

## SHAPES AND SCENARIOS IN THE FUTURE OF VOLUNTEERISM: POSSIBLE TRENDS

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1. Generally, a shortage of volunteers in relation to demand for them.
2. Volunteering may come to be seen increasingly as part of a larger whole of community-based support including volunteer time, materials, money, advocacy support, ideas and other input. Paralleling this, people who were once called "volunteer coordinators" or directors may transition to titles like "community resource manager."
3. Increasing attention might (or might not) be given to settings and situations in which volunteers do not work with or for paid staff, e.g. all-volunteer groups and freelancers.
4. Both among volunteers and their leaders, we may see greater awareness of the distinction between philosophies of volunteerism which "use" or "control" volunteers and approaches which concentrate on empowering them. Volunteers, especially younger ones, may increasingly insist on the latter approach, in their volunteer work.
- 5a. Pressure will probably continue, especially from national associations, for mandatory certification of individual careerists in volunteer administration. In one scenario this can fail to persuade enough people to become a significant future factor. Otherwise, significant futures would include a transitional situation in which many volunteer coordinators were certified while many others were not, and ultimately create a situation in which no uncertified person would be allowed to lead a volunteer program group or organization.
- 5b. Emphasis may shift from certifying individuals to certifying volunteer programs, though part of the program certification (accreditation) would be upgrading individual leadership.
6. There is a possibility we may (or may not) increasingly confront the involvement of volunteers by some as a justification for under-funding human service and caregiving organizations and causes. The replacement philosophy, acknowledged or not, has broad implications for staff-volunteer relations, for whom the coordinator should be accountable to, etc.
- 7a. Expectations of volunteers may get higher and higher and both individual volunteers and programs could be damaged because too much is expected of them.
- 7b. A counter-trend, among people with more hands-on daily experience with volunteer programs seems to be developing towards more realism, if not actually pessimism, about volunteer performance. From near-miraculous claims, some 30 years ago, we see far more today of sober analyses of staff resistance, liability, firing or otherwise dealing with difficult volunteers.
8. People increasingly use volunteer experience as a means of career exploration and preparation. (See Trend 4, Empowerment, here and also in Trend 9 below.)
9. Current research continues to document that volunteering is good for the volunteer medically as well as mentally; moreover, such research becomes far more widely believed by doctors and volunteers themselves. However, this also raises the question of how much is enough? At what point can too much volunteering start becoming bad for you?
10. An increasing amount of unpaid service will be done, less by free choice, and more by prescription, obligation, or social pressure, e.g. offenders sentenced to serve; students as part of school requirement; therapist-prescribed servers; employees in corporations wanting a reputation for social responsibility; any situation in which community service is mandated as a condition of membership in religious, civic, fraternal, school, government (youth service) or even military programs. Dominant scenario now is complete integration of these people with community volunteers, in volunteer programs. A significant minority, however, is deeply concerned about this one-track approach.
11. A trend of the past 20 years may (or may not) continue: broadening the definition of "volunteer" to include "receiving some money", e.g. in approximate sequence from no money at all, to work-related reimbursement, to stipends, to, most recently, minimum wage, with the claim these are still volunteers because they pay so low! (See also Trend 10.)
12. A perceived trend of 30 years may continue from emphasis on client impact of volunteers to emphasis on impact on volunteers, to emphasis on the well-being of the coordinator of volunteers--moving progressively "inward" from "treated" to treatment agent".

**NOW, MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, THE TRENDS YOU SEE AS SIGNIFICANT**

September 1989

# The Center For Creative Community

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW SERIES

## HORIZONS IN VOLUNTEERISM



The theme is a volunteerism which is still vital, still growing, rather than all settled and needing to be fenced in. The vision of volunteering is one in which dreams are nurtured and supported, rather than ridiculed or ignored. As Harriet Naylor said: "We need imaginative inspiration to dream of what could be and all the implications of what is now."

### A RECONSIDERATION OF VOLUNTEERISM: EXERCISES FOR CREATIVE GADFLIES

Nine exercises are presented for the encouragement and support of creative approaches to volunteerism generally, as well as specific volunteer programs. Developed in the CHALLENGE series of think tanks on volunteerism, these mini-think tanks include: "Tower of Babel"/ "Upside Down and Inside Out"/ "Questioning The Question"/ "The Evolution of a Question"/ "The Power of Assumptions"/ "What If.."/ "Anchors Away"/ "The Freedom to Dream"/ and "Getting Out of the Groove: Avoiding Creativity Traps in Pursuit of the Possible". Approx 35 pages. \$6 per copy

### SHAPES AND SCENARIOS IN THE FUTURE OF VOLUNTEERISM: FORECASTING & CREATING YOUR OWN

An introductory orientation to purposes, paradoxes and pitfalls in the futuring process is followed by seven strategies for the do-it-yourself futurist in volunteerism. These strategies are: **Future Factor Analysis/ Choicepoint Process/ The Opportunity-Threat Strategy/ Dubious Demographics and Other Hazards/ Visualizing Volunteer Futures/ The Time Machine: Seeing Yourself as Somebody's Ancestor/ and a General-Purpose Combination Process for Futuring.** All of these are practical procedures practitioners can easily handle, as they meet Gregory Baum's challenge: "Every person is called upon to create their own future." The materials are good both for workshops on futuring and for long-range planning sessions. 30-35 pages, \$6

### FRONTIERS 1989

The first in an annual series, this compendium of short essays outlines promising fresh perspectives and creative approaches to old issues and problems. Frontiers 1989 authors include: Jane Asche, Eileen Brown, Carol Hutchings, Jane Janey, Gary Norum, Jane Mallory Park, Ivan Scheier, and Lynda Workman. Each article is essentially an executive summary. Further readings and/or the author's address open up avenues for further exploration by interested readers. Moreover, we hope this year's readers may become next year's authors. Expected to be about 25-30 pages. \$6

### \*\*\*ORDERING INFORMATION\*\*\*

All three publications are complete and now at the printer. We expect to be able to start mailing orders by September 10-15, 1989. Cost of each publication is \$6.00 per copy for any number of copies. Add \$3.00 handling and postage for any-sized order. Checks should be made out in U.S. dollars to The Center for Creative Community, and sent to our post office box address: P.O. Box 2427, Santa Fe, NM 87504, U.S.A. In your order, please be sure to provide the full title and number of copies wanted for each publication ordered, and be sure to print clearly or type, the address to which you want your order sent. Thank you.

