

# Long Now Foundation

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The **Long Now Foundation**, established in 1996, is a private organization that seeks to become the seed of a very long-term cultural institution. It aims to provide a counterpoint to what it views as today's "faster/cheaper" mindset and to promote "slower/better" thinking. The Long Now Foundation hopes to creatively foster responsibility in the framework of the next 10,000 years. To emphasize this horizon, the group writes years using five digits instead of four: 02010 instead of 2010.



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## Projects

The Foundation has several ongoing projects, including a 10,000-year clock known as the *Clock of the Long Now*, the *Rosetta Project*, the *Long Bet Project*, the open source *Timeline Tool* (also known as Longviewer), the *Long Server* and a monthly seminar series.

### Clock of the Long Now

The purpose of the *Clock of the Long Now* is to construct a timepiece that will operate with minimum human intervention for ten millennia. It is to be constructed of durable materials, to be easy to repair, and to be made of largely valueless materials in case knowledge of the Clock is lost or it is deemed to be of no value to an individual or possible future civilization; in this way it is hoped that the Clock will not be looted or destroyed. Its power source (or sources) should be renewable but similarly unlootable. A prototype of a potential final clock candidate was activated on December 31, 1999, and is currently on display at the Science Museum at London. The Foundation hopes to construct the finished Clock at a

location near Ely, Nevada.

## Rosetta Project

The *Rosetta Project* is an effort to preserve all languages that have a high likelihood of extinction over the period from 2000 to 2100. These include many languages whose native speakers number in the thousands or fewer. Other languages with many more speakers are considered endangered by the project due to the increasing importance of English as an international language of commerce and culture. Samples of such languages are to be inscribed onto a disc of nickel alloy two inches (5.08 cm) across. A Version 1.0 of the disc was completed in the Autumn of 2002.

## Long Bet Project

The *Long Bet Project* was created by the Long Now Foundation to propose and keep track of bets on long-term events and stimulate discussion about the future. One example bet would be on whether people will regularly fly on pilotless aircraft by 2030.

Bets coming due in 2010 include predictions about Peak oil, print on demand, modem obsolescence, and commercially available 100-qubit quantum computers<sup>[1]</sup>.

## Seminars About Long-term Thinking

The *Seminars About Long-term Thinking* are a series of monthly lectures in San Francisco, CA, presented by the Foundation. They are intended to "nudge civilization toward making long-term thinking automatic and common." Topics have included preserving environmental resources, the extension of the human lifespan, the likelihood of an asteroid strike in the future, SETI, and the nature of time.

## Quotes

“ Civilization is reviving itself into a pathologically short attention span. The trend might be coming from the acceleration of technology, the short-horizon perspective of market-driven economics, the next-election perspective of democracies, or the distractions of personal multi-tasking. All are on the increase. Some sort of balancing corrective to the short-sightedness is needed—some mechanism or myth which encourages the long view and the taking of long-term responsibility—where 'long-term' is measured at least in centuries. Long Now proposes both a mechanism and a myth. ”

— Stewart Brand

“ When I was a child, people used to talk about what would happen by the year 02000. For the next thirty years they kept talking about what would happen by the year 02000, and now no one mentions a future date at all. The future has been shrinking by one year per year for my entire life. I think it is time for us to start a long-term project that gets people thinking past the mental barrier of an ever-shortening future. I would like to propose a large (think Stonehenge) mechanical clock, powered by seasonal temperature changes. It ticks once a year, bongs once a century, and the cuckoo comes out every millennium. ”

## Board members

Board Members (<http://longnow.org/people/board/>) of the Long Now Foundation include

- Danny Hillis
- Stewart Brand
- Chris Anderson
- Douglas Carlston
- Esther Dyson
- Brian Eno
- Mitchell Kapor
- Michael Keller
- Kevin Kelly
- Roger Kennedy
- Kim Polese
- David Rumsey
- Paul Saffo
- Peter Schwartz

## Seminars

In November 2003 the Long Now Foundation began a series of monthly Seminars About Long-term Thinking (SALT) with a lecture by Brian Eno. The seminars are held in the San Francisco Bay area and have focused on long term policy and thinking, scenario planning, singularity and the projects of the foundation. The seminars are available for download in various formats from the Long Now Foundation.

Fora.tv (<http://www.fora.tv>) aired a June 26, 2006 seminar entitled "Playing with Time" hosted by Brand, and lectured by Eno and Will Wright about procedural mathematics and music, and the development of computer science since the late 1960s. It featured a demonstration of a preview build of *Spore*.

## See also

- Year 10,000 problem
- Perpetual calendar
- All Species Foundation

## References

1. <sup>^</sup> <http://blog.longnow.org/2009/12/31/long-bets-in-02010/>

## External links

- The Long Now Foundation (<http://www.longnow.org/>)
- SALT (Seminars About Long-term Thinking) (<http://www.longnow.org/projects/seminars>)
- The Long Now discussion forum - No longer active (<http://discuss.longnow.org>)
- The Rosetta Project (<http://www.rosettaproject.org/>)
- The Long Bets Foundation (<http://www.longbets.org/>)
  - A Look at Accountable Predictions

([http://marketplace.publicradio.org/shows/2004/01/01\\_mpp.html/](http://marketplace.publicradio.org/shows/2004/01/01_mpp.html/)) Radio feature about The Long Bet Project, from the U.S. public radio program 'Marketplace'

- "Buffett's big bet: The celebrated investor wagers a tidy sum that even carefully chosen hedge funds won't return more than the market over time"  
([http://money.cnn.com/2008/06/04/news/newsmakers/buffett\\_bet.fortune/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2008/06/04/news/newsmakers/buffett_bet.fortune/index.htm)) -(*Fortune Magazine* on a Longbets bet)

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