

Connections: past, present, and future

by Scott Lebin

The culture of any society can only be understood in relation to the time in which such a society exists. Culture is defined as the sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another. It is transmitted, through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art, from one generation to the next.

In Geneva we currently can identify many aspects of our culture that are related to living in the beginning of the 21st century. Today, our electronic media causes wireless communication to have as much value as speaking directly with another human being. The speed of electronics has forced us to experience more change than any generation ever saw in a lifetime centuries ago. We also know that time spent online has supplanted time previously used talking and communicating directly with others, unless you're out and talking to Siri.

The language we use has been shortened to eliminate specific words and phrases that used to have subtle meanings. You "may" do something meant that you were given permission to act; you "might" do something meant that you possibly would act. Listen to conversations today and "might" and "may" are used for the same context. There are many examples of our less distinct use of language.

Our institutions are also indicative of changes we have seen in our lifetime. Banks have few teller lines because most banking is done online. All stores have bar codes

to electronically provide for easy selling of items. However if we lose electricity, a problem MIGHT exist in the purchasing process.

I went to a volleyball game last week and ordered two hot dogs at \$1.50 and a bag of chips at \$.75 and two bottles of water at \$1.00. The student selling the items said she would have to get her phone to add up how much I owed. Using our minds to complete tasks has changed from past cultures that cherished not looking up items but remembering facts.

Fifty years from now the Geneva citizens will have different attitudes, customs, and beliefs from today's population. If we traveled the world today, we could find communities throughout the world that have very different group attitudes, rituals and art. How will all of the developments we share over the next 50 years change our culture here?

As communication becomes more frequent across borders, we will all become more understanding and also be aware of new beliefs and attitudes that we are exposed to from other cultures. Gender pay and cost of goods will be on parity so women will not earn less for the same jobs done by men, nor will they pay more for the same goods just because they are female.

Our community will be representative of a world society that will have a blend of traditions, rituals, and institutions whose art and social activities will represent such diversity. Tolerance of differences and traditions among

people will be respected. There will also be an interest in the old fashioned dress of the 2016 culture. Torn jeans will not be a fashion statement, and clothes will be printed on a local printer so there will be an individual quality to all wearing apparel. Yes, everyone will be a designer. Our transportation will have a Jetson quality transporting us automatically from place to place while we wear our Google-like glasses to create our own personal vistas. Paintings from any museum in the world will be available electronically on any wall in our homes. We will be able to change images as often as we want. We will be able to transport ourselves from our homes electronically in an IMAX simulation in order to experience any community or historic site in the world before we decide to visit it in person. More significantly, we will be able to transport ourselves to any community or event of the past and experience it firsthand. All of these changes will have the positive result of creating a world population where tolerance and enthusiasm of different cultures is appreciated by everyone and there is an overwhelming curiosity about our universe, planet, and home called Geneva. ●

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LD055942-02/16