

What You Will Do in Your Career Hasn't Been Invented Yet

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Abstract

This talk is primarily targeted towards a university audience, and was prompted by a comment early in my career, when a veteran geologist mentioned that everything we do was considered unconventional when his career started. Now I find myself saying the same thing to young earth scientists, and predicting that they will repeat the same experience in a few decades.

Moore's Law (the prediction that computing capacity doubles every 18-24 months) marches relentlessly into the future, and our only choices are to try to harness it, or to ignore it at our own peril. By definition any extractive industry constantly struggles to replace depleted resources, and in a highly competitive business every breakthrough in either technology or insight is quickly exploited, and the hunt for the next innovation is already under way before the last one can even be deployed.

The good news is that this endless cycle generates continuous opportunity for the life-long learners among us, but the flip side is that nobody can confidently predict where the focus will shift to next, and the only sure thing is that your expertise becomes obsolete if it is allowed to become static.