

TRENDS

in Society and Information Technology

2016 Seminar Series



JOHN SEELY BROWN, Chief Scientist, Xerox Corporation (Retired)

“Living/Learning/Leading in a White Water World”

Friday, October 14, 2016

2 to 3 p.m.

6011 Donald Bren Hall

A reception will follow the talk in the 5th floor atrium.
Free and open to the public; no RSVP required.

ABSTRACT Adapting to a world of exponential changes means that, in addition to taking on the hard socio-technical challenges, we need to also deeply question our institutional architectures, our public policies, and forms of learning. And all of these are entangled. Indeed, new deep learning systems, as seen in autonomous vehicles, for example, raise fundamental ethical issues while they also influence and enable new behaviors and social practices. This means, that as technologists, we are now being thrown into the midst of some fundamental – if not ontological – questions. This talk will explore our rapidly changing, broadly connected and radically contingent world and the lenses needed to frame, or reframe, the challenges that technological advances have pushed forward.

BIO John Seely Brown, also known as “JSB,” was the Chief Scientist of Xerox Corporation until April 2002 as well as the director of the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) until June 2000. A master integrator and instigator of productive friction, JSB explores the whitespace between disciplines and builds bridges between disparate organizations and ideas. In his more than two decades at PARC, Brown transformed the organization into a truly multidisciplinary research center at the creative edge of applied technology and design, integrating social sciences and arts into the traditional physics and computer science research and expanding the role of corporate research to include topics such as the management of radical innovation, organizational learning, and complex adaptive systems. His personal research interests include new approaches to learning, digital youth culture, digital media, and the application of technology to accelerate deep learning within and across organizational boundaries – in brief, to design for emergence in a constantly changing world.

Brown graduated from Brown University in 1962 with degrees in physics and mathematics. In 1972 he received a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in computer and communication sciences. His nine honorary degrees reflect the breadth and diversity of his leadership. Part scientist, part artist and part strategist, JSB’s views are unique and distinguished by a broad view of the human contexts in which technologies operate and a healthy skepticism about whether or not change always represents genuine progress.

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