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Farewell to Fast Forward

As your tech columnist takes his leave, he looks back over six-and-a-half years, forward to a Facebook book, and beyond.

By [David Kirkpatrick](#), senior editor
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NEW YORK (Fortune) -- This is my farewell column. Fast Forward has been a weekly labor of love, mostly, since early 2002. Now I'm taking an extended leave from Fortune to write my book, *The Facebook Effect*.

The tech column began in the depths of the industry slump following the dotcom bust. But I always took the view - and still do - that tech's greatest glories lie ahead. (For archives of the column since January 2000, go [here](#).)

Things really do change! One of my first columns described a new competitor in enterprise software, and explained why Salesforce.com's (CRM) CEO was declaring "the end of software." Marc Benioff's notion of software delivered as a service over the Internet rather than on costly customer-managed infrastructure was radical then.

I'm writing this while flying home from an Aspen Institute seminar on "cloud computing." The seminar's diverse and eminent group of industry experts agreed that we are moving towards a day when essentially all computing will be delivered as a Net service.

From the beginning Fast Forward has held that tech's greatest unfulfilled promise was as a tool to help the world's poor emerge from deprivation. I'm pleased to be taking my leave just as Fortune launches the Legatum Fortune Technology Prize, which will award \$1 million annually to business pioneers of tech for the poor.

During my years writing the column we've seen the world embrace the cellphone as a sort of universal tool for empowerment. Today 70% of Africa's population is within the reach of a cellphone signal. Soon I'm sure it will be close to 100%. And more purposeful efforts to empower the poor continue, like the One Laptop Per Child initiative's amazing XO laptop for children, much chronicled here.



Fortune senior editor David Kirkpatrick is ending his Fast Forward column to write a book.

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The revolution continues

Speaking of cellphones, Fast Forward's swan song must do justice to the iPhone revolution. I know it's been widely covered, but not only is the Apple (AAPL, Fortune 500) iPhone the first truly portable multi-function consumer computer, its new applications store is also ground-breaking. It makes creating and profiting from software development uniquely easy. Customers can readily find, install and start using new micro-apps. I am as enamored with the iPhone as anyone, and feel certain it is the beginning of a new era in portable technology.

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So I'm leaving to write a book. Why, you may ask, have I chosen to devote it to Facebook? I believe the social network is likely to have a significant impact on the way we live. There are good reasons why it is the biggest and fastest-growing service of the Web 2.0 era.

The story of Facebook is fascinating, beginning with its creation by then 19-year-old Harvard sophomore Mark Zuckerberg. By sticking to his vision, this innovator is creating a new type of social tool and a form of communication that may alter not only social life, but also politics, business, marketing, and other spheres.

I welcome your help. Send me stories of things that wouldn't have happened without Facebook, a good story from its history, or even feel free to tell me you think I'm completely nuts to be so excited about it. Readers have certainly never hesitated to express views like that. Write me at David_Kirkpatrick@Fortunemail.com.

Once I finish the book I doubt if I will resume a weekly column in this form. So this really is my last Fast Forward. I hope you'll read The Facebook Effect. And eventually you'll see me again in the pages of Fortune and on Fortune.com.

Thanks for your attention over the last six-and-a-half years. ■

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