



editor's note

Fulfilling the Promise

It's finally happening. The promises that were made 15 years ago are becoming reality and I for one want to say, "What the heck took so long?"

While I admit that my expectations were formed solely on fiction and advertising, the fact remains that until this year, I've been largely underwhelmed. Back in 1988 I read *Neuromancer* and a whole world opened inside my head. Writer William Gibson had created a world within a world that had to be believed to be seen. In cyberspace a data thief named Case could jack in and drop out; he could change the world by dicing data clusters. I have no idea what happened in that book; I recall being awed but not necessarily following the serpentine plot twists.

Not long after that I bought a new Macintosh SE. The thing was a revelation, a miracle, a machine of dreams. Then I found Mondo magazine which inspired me to sign up for something called The Well (a popular, early BBS and community site). I was jacked into cyberspace, a cyberpunk in early bloom. I bragged. I swaggered. I couldn't even log on.

Not knowing any UNIX, nor understanding that I needed to know command line interfaces, I never connected with a single soul on The Well. They were there, the early digeratti, I just couldn't get to them. The interface was hard-core geek and I was a ski bum who'd read some science fiction. I typed gobbledygook into a vacuum and was too chagrined to ask for my money back.

The Mac, with its mighty four-meg hard drive was kinda neat, but nothing compared to Case's rig (although it worked better than the Tandy computer I tried to replace it with). Ever since then I've been waiting for the reality of the Internet and distributed computing to fulfill the promises of 1988.

And now that time has come.

The Internet finally works. I am now able to jack in and get to my data wherever I am in the world without playing with PPP or carrying around a brick-sized modem. Recently I logged in wirelessly from under a palm

on Waikiki. Last week I was able to upload all the digital pictures I'd just taken at the James Joyce museum in Dublin to a virtual hard drive located in a place I'll never see. Later that same day, while flying from Shannon to Boston, I showed my Ireland slide show to a 71-year-old Austrian grandmother sitting next to me. My laptop showed the pix full-screen, at high-res, with background music and written commentary. It wasn't much for a full-on computer geek, but to me it felt pretty cool. And she was blown away

In this issue of Wasatch Digital iQ I think we've conveyed some of that same sense of becoming that I felt way back when I first picked up *Neuromancer*. With long-awaited wireless Internet finally verging on the kind of ubiquity that the medium demands, we are not only able to log on from anywhere, but we've also spawned the type of Case-inspired hacker that Gibson may have had in mind. This month we ride with one such hacker and watch him effortlessly slip behind the firewalls of some of Salt Lake City's largest companies. We also learn how to protect ourselves against this kind of intrusion. We take a look at Utah's booming Biotech sector, and at some of the unexpected consequences of so much fast-paced change. We glimpse the future of biotech from Utah Life Science Association's Brian Moss and also from Troy D'Ambrosio, director of the newly formed Lassonde New Venture Development Center at the University of Utah's Research Park.

Despite the daily death knell from NASDAQ, these are exciting times. In a lot of respects, we've finally made 1988 fiction into reality. Now if someone could just explain why my brand new computer takes longer to boot up than my first SE, I'd be a happy man.

Bill Kerig
Editor in Chief