

Is the pace of innovation increasing or decreasing?

Faster, smarter chips and increasingly powerful computers will rocket towards a “technological singularity” sometime between 2040 and 2080, says inventor and futurist [Ray Kurzweil](#). By then, change will be so blindingly fast that we just can’t predict where it will go.

Pentagon physicist [Jonathan Huebner](#) disagrees. Having plotted major innovations and scientific advances over time he claims: “The rate of innovation peaked in 1873 and has been declining ever since” so that by 2024, innovation will have slumped to the level of the Dark Ages.

Can the answer be so simply bipolar? Does innovation move along a smooth curve or should we expect a future of more punctuated step changes with relative stasis, or only incremental shifts in between?

Sustained exponential growth as described by Ray Kurzweil is rare in nature and “it usually ends when it begins to matter”, according to innovation theorist [Ikka Tuomi](#) of Prospective Technological Studies in Seville, Spain.

We should give more focus to cultural innovation and society’s impact upon the development of current technological ideas. Society has yet to catch up with all the technological changes around it – when it does, what new path of innovation might we then expect?