

## Kurzweil Keynotes Bio-IT World; Interview in CIO Mag; Using Text-to-Speech

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The **Bio-IT World** fifth annual **Life Sciences Conference and Expo** on **Biotechnology** and **Bioinformatics** is to be held in Boston the week of April 3, 2006 (*which coincidentally happens to be at the same time and location as the **Linux World Expo***). The conference will begin with a keynote lecture "Reprogramming Biology" by **Ray Kurzweil**, one of my favorite technology luminaries whose ideas constantly fascinate and inspire me.

"**Reprogramming Biology**" is the title of noted inventor Ray Kurzweil's opening keynote address. Kurzweil will expound upon themes in his latest book, **The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology**, in which he predicts the next few decades will see the merging of human biology with the staggering achievements of "GNR" - genetics, nanotechnology and robotics - to create a species of extraordinarily high intelligence, comprehension, and memory.

I think Mr. Kurzweil would *not* be surprised to know that when I browsed to **his interview with Art Jahnke at CIO Magazine** that it occurred to me to use my Macintosh's **Text-To-Speech** functionality to read the article out loud to me.

**Machine Dreams**, Interview with Ray Kurzweil by CIO Magazine

When software runs inside our brains, what will happen to us? Ray Kurzweil, who helped invent the IT present, explains to Web Editorial Director

Art Jahnke how humans fit into the IT future. You may not like it.

You see, I'm either a lazy reader, or a distracted one at least. When I read I find that it takes me a long time to settle down and focus, and until I do I tend to get distracted by what's going on around me or by mental tangents brought on by some idea in what I'm reading. An **article of this length** would usually take me 20 or 30 minutes depending on the number of self-driven interruptions that occurred.

Instead, by highlighting the article's text and entering the keyboard combination to start text-to-speech, I was able to complete the article in about 10 minutes while listening to the computer generated voice labelled as Victoria. This is the first time I used this Macintosh feature for anything more than novelty, and I was very surprised at the quality of pronunciation and flow of speech. I understood the spoken text very

well, and by setting it at a slightly rapid pace I could keep my attention focussed on topic.

**Previous experiences** with text-to-speech in recent years were somewhat disappointing due mispronunciation of technical vocabulary, but since Kurzweil's article went so well, I gave it a try on some of the software articles at [labs.macromedia.com](http://labs.macromedia.com), starting with an overview of **Flex Enterprise Services**. The spoken text from this software article was again surprisingly good. Single lines of MXML code were well understood and clear, although dense lines of ActionScript functions are best avoided with text-to-speech and simply read off the page with real eyeballs.

In summary, I can see that I will be getting a lot more reading done and saving time by allowing Victoria to do all the work while keeping me on track.

Oh, and what about ColdFusion in all this? Well, with **misconceptions like this** still abounding its not surprising that Bioinformatics programmers look down their noses at it.

"Coldfusion is just a software for developing webpages and I guess fewer and fewer people are using it. Strictly speaking, it is not a programming language. I would say Perl and Java are the major programming languages for developing bioinformatics applications."  
-cyberpostdoc

Even more reason to share Simon Horwith's article at every opporunity:

### **Misconceptions and Myths About ColdFusion ... debunked!**

The real battle to dispel myths and misconceptions about ColdFusion is not taking place at conferences and user group meetings. It's happening in the workplace, and every ColdFusion developer shares the responsibility to dispel any misconceptions or myths they encounter and to defend the use of their beloved product.