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Canada's Association of Information Technology (IT) Professionals

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## Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Space, Oceans, Legacy IT Transformation: from Mervyn Adrian, Senior VP, Forrester Research

This is the [continuing series](#) of special interviews appearing first here in the Canadian IT Managers (CIM) forum that are highlighted in Computing Canada's (CC) [Blogged Down](#) (BD) editorial columns.

**This week we talk with top-ranking executive, Merv Adrian, Senior Vice-President of Forrester Research. On Monday we began the interview, and profiled Merv's rich and long history in the industry. Today I put these final questions to Merv:**



**SI: For the future, which specific new technologies do you find will have the greatest impact on history?**

**MA: Nanotechnology.** I realize this is an enormous and very broad area, but that is precisely the point. The applications are so varied as to be staggering, and we have only scratched the surface here. Nanotech will be as significant as the industrial revolution itself has been.

**Biotechnology.** The mapping of the human genome was one of the supreme intellectual achievements of mankind and its application to solving problems of disease will only be the beginning of its usefulness.

**SI: Provide commentary on three topics of your choosing.**

**MA: TOPIC 1: Space**

It's time to go back – grand challenges like the moon race of the 1960s are catalysts for great leaps in multiple areas of thought, engineering and what it means to be human. It's easy to dismiss the space program in the light of terrestrial problems, but the human race needs frontiers and pioneers. We need to re-engage the imagination of our young people.

**TOPIC 2: The Oceans**

All of the above applies here, with the added issue that we are slowly transforming the world's aquatic environment in ways we don't understand – and the implications could be dramatically negative. Another place we need to raise the profile.

**TOPIC 3: On a more mundane level – legacy transformation in IT.**

We are at last at a place where it makes sense to clear out some of the systems we have been running for decades and replace them with newer, nimbler, easier-to-manage ones. The costs of what was called "rip and replace" have always been too high for some of these systems relative to the perceived benefits of their replacement. I'm talking to more and more organizations that are saying, "At last it's time." And they are right.

**SI: Now for some lighter questions: What is your favorite passion?**

**MA:** After my family? The arts. One of my personal sanity mechanisms is finding time to visit museums when I travel, and I've had the good fortune to see many of the world's great ones. Plenty more on the list, though. But of all the arts, the one that rises to the top for me is music – I've hit a lot of great concert halls, too.

**SI: What is your favorite gadget?**

**MA:** It's not really a gadget. My guitar is the one "thing" I own that I want with me whenever possible. I usually have it with me on trips of more than two days, and an hour with it in the evening is as important to me as a fine meal or a massage is to many of my friends.

As for business gadgets – I'd have to say my Blackberry – it's my phone, my calendar, my email, access to the web now that networks are faster. I work with my laptop, but I live with my Blackberry.

**SI--Final comment:** You have contributed significantly throughout your career to the business technology industry. We are fortunate to have you share your deep insights with the audience. Thank you for this interview. We wish you continued success for the future.

**MA:** Thanks for asking. Every day is a learning experience for me – and I wish the same for everyone who reads this.

I also encourage you to share your thoughts here on these interviews or send me an e-mail at [sibaraki@cips.ca](mailto:sibaraki@cips.ca).

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Thank you,  
Stephen Ibaraki, FCIPS, I.S.P.



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