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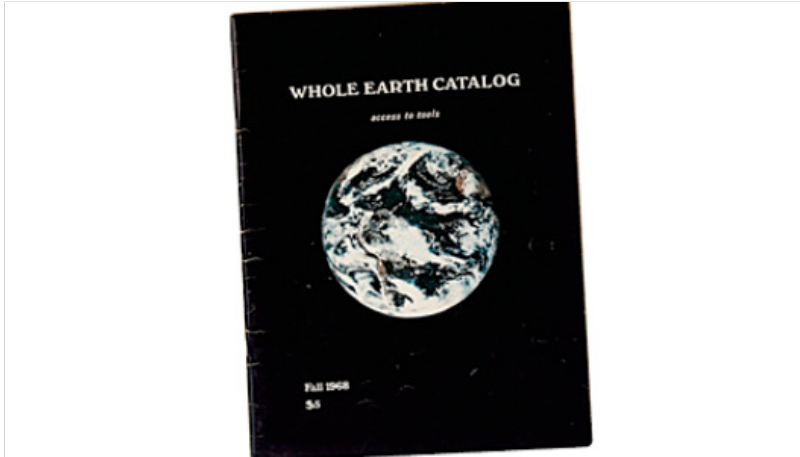
The importance of slowing down

Founder of the Whole Earth Catalog Stewart Brand believes in taking his time.

Fri, Dec 01 2006 at 3:30 PM EST

By [PlentyMag.com](#)

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SLOWPOKE: The Whole Earth Catalog

In 1968, Stewart Brand launched the first Whole Earth Catalog, a compendium of tools, designs, and ideas that started off as required reading for back-to-the-landers, and gradually became a counterculture classic. Publication of the catalog has since ceased, but Brand hasn't stopped thinking about how people interact with the earth. A founding member of the Long Now Foundation, a group dedicated to promoting "slower, better thinking" in the age of the ever-shortening attention span, Brand believes that the solutions to Earth's problems require serious perspective (think 10,000 years of foresight). Brand, 68, gave Plenty the long view on nuclear power, world population, and the importance of slowing down.



What does the earth have to gain through "slower, better thinking"?

Life systems and climatic systems tend to work big and slow, and as we're finding with climate change, engaging them takes a kind of patient activity. The best ecological studies are those that go on for decades, and preferably centuries, because many of the patterns you're looking for have those kinds of cycles in them. Our way of grasping that time frame, symbolically at least, is by building a 10,000-year clock inside a mountain in eastern Nevada. When it's completed, we hope it will be visited in a monumental way—like going to the Statue of Liberty or something — just to contemplate that time frame.

If I were going to visit the clock, what would I see?

It's not there yet. It will be, we expect, something that you climb to in the mountain. There will be a sequence of chambers and hallways—somewhat mysterious, somewhat labyrinthine. Eventually you'll come to the display of the clock, which shows you where you are on a 20,000-year time frame. Power for the display of the clock will be provided by the visitors, who will have to wind the clock to see what time it is.

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