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Folklore in the Media

Newspaper Project

## Articles about the Year 2000 and Computer Failure in the Washington Post and New York Times.

Many politicians, businessmen, and computer specialists have been talking for the past couple of years about how computers are going to crash in the year 2000 because they can't handle the change over in dates. For this project I collected articles from the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* from January 1996 till September 30, 1997 and here is some of the data I found.

Since the start of 1997, stories about the year 2000 and computer failure have increased dramatically (Graph 1). In the *Washington Post*, for the whole year of 1996, there was only 3 articles about the year 2000 problem. In only nine months of 1997 there have already been 7. That is more than twice as many as last year.

The same is true for the *New York Times* in the years 1997 and 1996 (Graph 2). In 1996 the *Times* published 2 articles on the subject but in 1997 they ran 8 articles. This is 4 times the amount of coverage in only 9 months of time. Both the numbers for the *Post* and for the *Times* are close to each other.

Whether you call it Y2K, Millennium Virus, Year 2000 Problem, or Year 2000 Bug its all the same thing. Both newspapers refer to the failure

of computers in the year 2000 in different ways. This preference is left up to the writer I suppose but the term of choice seems to be The Year 2000 Problem(Graph 3). Both newspapers used that term most frequently, using it twice as much as the next most popular which was The Year 2000 Bug. The least used term of them all was Y2K (stands for Year 2 Kilo) which seems to be the most technical of the four.

Many of the so-called experts on this subject speculate on the amount of money and the types of problems that the world will run into in the year 2000(Graph 4). The government is spending a lot of money time on this subject. Many regular consumers like you and I are also topics of these articles. Speculation on the problems banks and the economy are also covered.

The government seems to be receiving the bulk of the media attention with 14 of the 20 articles discussing government concerns and money. The government is making public statements as well as establishing self review committees which is drawing the bulk of the media attention on this subject.

Three of the newspaper articles dealt with the affect of the changing of the Millennium on consumers. With so many electronics in the home now days the computer experts are speculating a problem there also. Of the three articles one of them was published in the *Washington Post* and the other two in the *New York Times*.

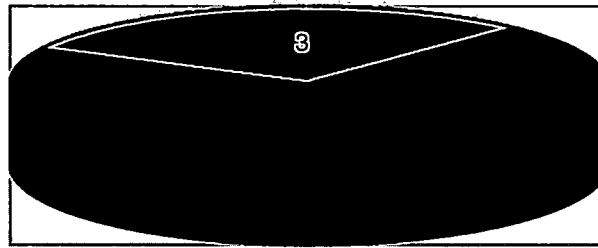
The remaining three articles were on two different subjects. One of them dealt exclusively with banks and banking computers of not just the U.S. but of world banks also. Two of the articles claimed that the year 2000 virus could cause a global recession. Some of the articles dealt with one or a couple of the issues.

All of the articles talked briefly about the issue and some solutions to the problem in some way but 6 of them went into more detail than others(Graph 5). Of those 6, new companies popping up was the discussed in 2 of the articles. The other four articles had parts or most of the article talked about finding old computer programmers and hiring them to re-program the computers.

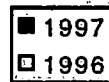
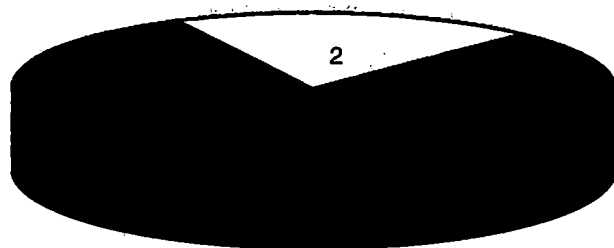
The New York Times and The Washington Post both seem to be paying more attention to the issue of the year 2000 this year than last. Both newspapers are reporting on the subject equally and probably only grow from here.

# Graphs

1



Articles In The Washington Post

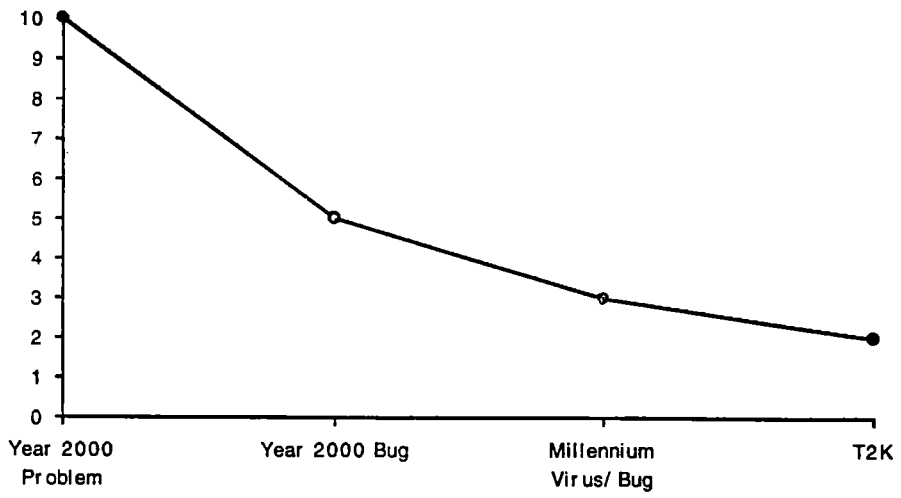


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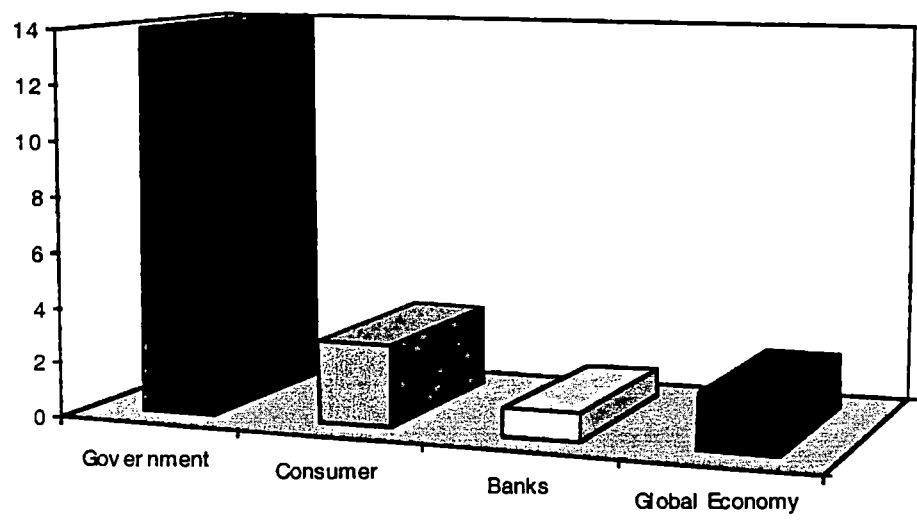
Articles In The New York Times

### Terms

3



4



### Areas Of Concern

# 5

## Remedies Offered

