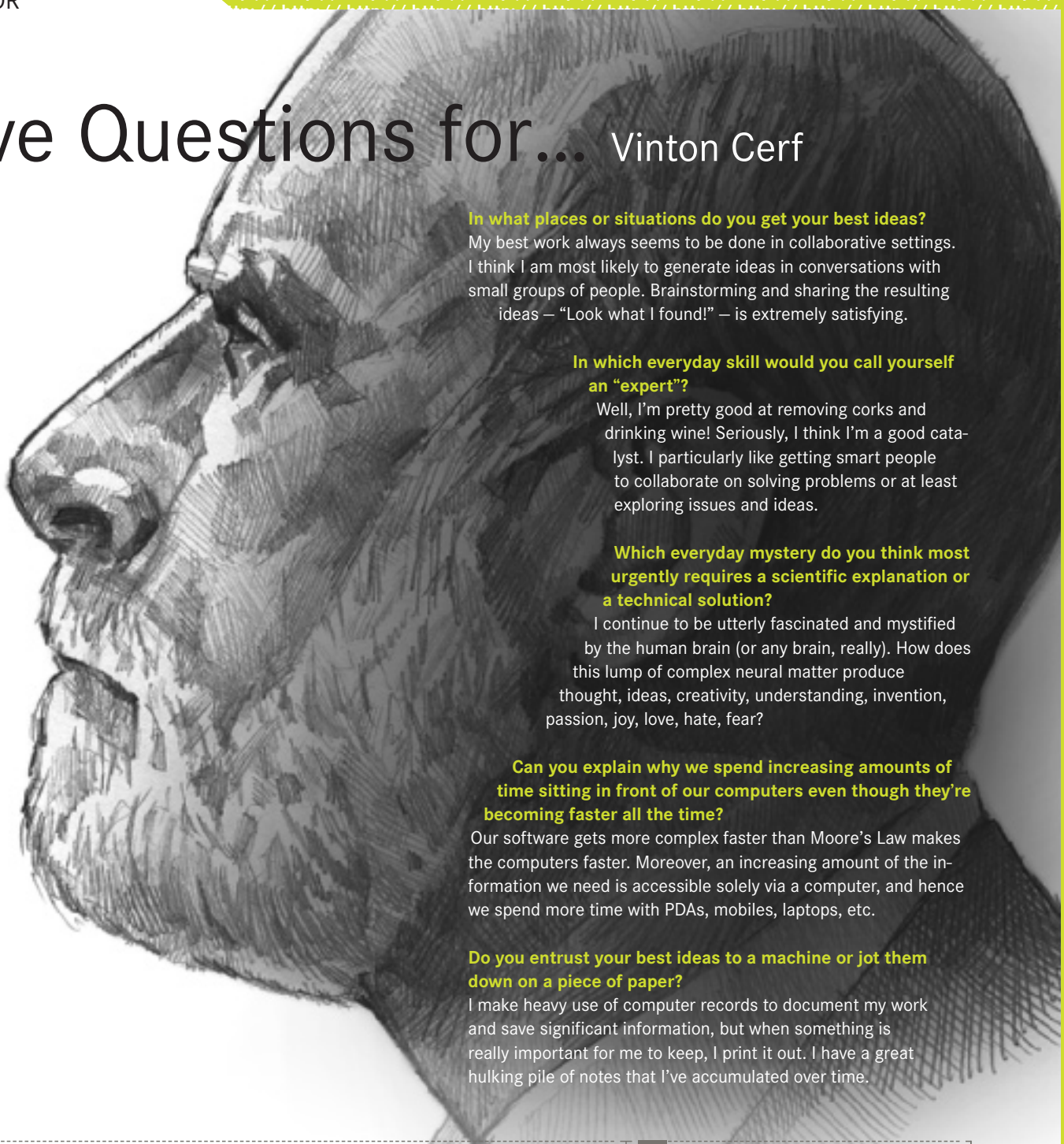




REFLECTOR

Five Questions for... Vinton Cerf



In what places or situations do you get your best ideas?

My best work always seems to be done in collaborative settings. I think I am most likely to generate ideas in conversations with small groups of people. Brainstorming and sharing the resulting ideas – “Look what I found!” – is extremely satisfying.

In which everyday skill would you call yourself an “expert”?

Well, I’m pretty good at removing corks and drinking wine! Seriously, I think I’m a good catalyst. I particularly like getting smart people to collaborate on solving problems or at least exploring issues and ideas.

Which everyday mystery do you think most urgently requires a scientific explanation or a technical solution?

I continue to be utterly fascinated and mystified by the human brain (or any brain, really). How does this lump of complex neural matter produce thought, ideas, creativity, understanding, invention, passion, joy, love, hate, fear?


Can you explain why we spend increasing amounts of time sitting in front of our computers even though they’re becoming faster all the time?

Our software gets more complex faster than Moore’s Law makes the computers faster. Moreover, an increasing amount of the information we need is accessible solely via a computer, and hence we spend more time with PDAs, mobiles, laptops, etc.

Do you entrust your best ideas to a machine or jot them down on a piece of paper?

I make heavy use of computer records to document my work and save significant information, but when something is really important for me to keep, I print it out. I have a great hulking pile of notes that I’ve accumulated over time.

 VINTON G. CERF

 WEB TIP

The mathematician Vinton (“Vint”) G. Cerf, who was born in 1943, is one of the architects of the World Wide Web. In the late 1970s he worked with Robert Kahn to develop the fundamental protocols (TCP/IP) for transmitting arbitrary data packets through a distributed network of

computers. In the course of the ARPANET project he created the basis of the Internet. Cerf received a Ph.D. in computer science from the University of California in Los Angeles and has received many awards and honors. Today, as Vice President and Chief Internet Evangelist, he is a

member of Google Inc.’s management team. HTR online features an extensive interview with Cerf about the mobile and automobile Internet, and his vision of an interplanetary data network.

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