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Bill Gates Funds Geoengineering and Climate Projects, Steve Ballmer on China, and Other Microsoft-Related News

Gregory T. Huang 1/28/10

Lest Apple take all the headlines this week, a certain software powerhouse in Redmond, WA, is making waves in its own way. Analysts and stockholders are anxiously awaiting the results of Microsoft's fourth-quarter earnings call today, with some predicting a boost in revenues thanks to Windows 7. But there are other things going on too.





—OK, he doesn't technically work at Microsoft anymore, but chairman Bill Gates has certainly been in the news a lot lately. One item you might not have noticed, however, was a report this week from *Science* magazine reporter Eli Kintisch. He wrote that Gates has been funding academic research on geoengineering, climate change, and energy since 2007. According to the story, Gates has put up at least \$4.5 million to explore things like altering the stratosphere to reflect some solar energy, filtering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and brightening ocean clouds. None of this is surprising, given Gates's involvement with huge, Earth-scale projects at places like Bellevue, WA-based Intellectual Ventures. But the specific connections to the University of Calgary, the Carnegie Institution for Science, and Silicon Valley inventor Armand Neukermans are interesting.

—Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer went on the record yesterday about doing business in China. This is a topic I have some familiarity with, having documented Microsoft's research and development efforts in the Middle Kingdom over the past decade. Ballmer's post comes on the heels of the flap involving Google in China. He didn't say anything earth-shattering, but his comments reinforced the notion that Microsoft has been in China far longer than Google has, and has built up deeper relationships with Chinese government officials and businesses.

He wrote, "We have done business in China for more than 20 years and we intend to stay engaged, which means our business must respect the laws of China. That's true for every company doing business in countries around the world: we are all subject to local laws." Ballmer continued: "At the same time, Microsoft is opposed to restrictions on peaceful political expression, and we have conversations with governments to make our views known. In every country in which we operate, including China, Microsoft requires proper legal authority before we remove any Internet content; and if we remove content, we give users notice."

—On the healthcare-IT front, Ryan reported today that Microsoft's HealthVault software platform for managing electronic health records has expanded to its third country (after the U.S. and Canada), via a licensing deal from German conglomerate Siemens. The partnership was created through Siemens' IT services and solutions division. Financial terms weren't given, but it could be an important step in getting Microsoft's health-related products to be adopted much more widely.

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