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# A moment of serendipity (and seven megatrends)

Serendipity is when you find things you weren't looking for because finding what you are looking for is so damned difficult.

Erin McKean, TED Talk, *The Joy of Lexicography*.

**I**work at CSIRO. It's Australia's largest science agency, with about 6500 staff at locations across the country. It's got every type of scientist ever invented. It's got physicists, chemists, astronomers, engineers, ecologists, mathematicians, geologists, economists, social scientists and psychologists. It's even got an anthropologist and a philosopher. It's got people who wear laboratory coats and look into test tubes and it's got people who talk to community groups about their aspirations. It's got lots of geeks. And we were geeks before it was cool to be a geek. It's also got every other type of personality you could imagine. And many that you couldn't easily imagine. We're a curious mix at CSIRO.

Even if you haven't heard of CSIRO you probably use some of the stuff we invented. CSIRO developed the wireless LAN technology that lets one computer talk to another. It's going to be in 5 billion devices worldwide this year. We invented the polymer banknote, the first currency that can go through the washing machine and come out just fine. It's now the national currency of 22 countries worldwide and there are 3 billion notes in circulation. We helped track the 1969 Apollo moon landing to help it touch down in the right place – i.e. on the moon. And in the 1950s we invented permanent-pleated women's skirts. You might think that means the 1950s were probably a slow