International Business Machines

Michael Rothschild and Marcus Lundberg came to speak to us on the 10th, and their presentation style was quite interesting. They really didn’t have anything formal to say about IBM, but they simply asked us what we wanted to talk about. At first they showed us a really cool video talking about the history of IBM since it has been 100 years since their founding. In the video, each person mentioned what happened at IBM the year they were born, starting with a man who was 100 years old and ending with a baby saying “Watson”.

Watson is a supercomputer that can comprehend human language. This was a pretty big project for a team at IBM, and they’ve spent about 6 years in development for it. Watson is going on the show Jeopardy soon to compete against the current Jeopardy greats and past champions. From the tests, Watson has done pretty well, but there are still some bugs where it doesn’t quite follow the topic correctly. Watson works by listening for key terms in the question, relating them, and choosing the answer that has the best percentage of being correct. Finally, Watson has to reformat its answer into the Jeopardy-style answer as a question. At least, that’s how I understand how it works. There may be some secretive algorithms and magic done behind the scenes as well. Watson is an interesting project in the AI sector of computing, which interests me a great deal, along with robotics.

I would’ve been interested to hear Marcus and Michael’s take on cloud computing, but unfortunately we ran out of time before we could ask that question of them. This wasn’t quite “unfortunate” because we still talked about a great deal of interesting things, but I was just curious about how they or IBM felt about the subject. I immensely enjoyed them coming to talk to us, even more so than other companies that came earlier in the semester.