

human body as a machine. Wedged among these is a book that particularly stands out to anyone interested in living to 500.

The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology, published in 2005, is the seminal work by futurist Ray Kurzweil.

He famously predicted that in 2045, humankind will have its Terminator moment: The rise of computers will outpace our ability to control them. To keep up, we will radically transform our biology via nanobots and other machines that will enhance our anatomy and our DNA, changing everything about how we live and die.

"It will liberate us from our own limitations," says Maris, who studied neuroscience at Middlebury College and once worked in a biomedical lab at Duke University. Kurzweil is a friend.

Google hired him to help Maris and other Googlers understand a world in which machines surpass human biology. This might be a terrifying, dystopian future to some. To Maris, it's business.

This is where he hopes to find, and fund, the next generation of companies that will change the world, or possibly save it. "We actually have the tools in the life sciences to achieve anything that you have the audacity to envision," he says. "I just hope to live long enough not to die."

Maris is an unusual guy with an unusual job. Seven years ago, Sergey Brin and Larry Page, the founders of Google, tapped him to start a venture capital fund, putting him smack between those tech titans and the sea of ambitious entrepreneurs trying to be just like them. At the time, he was a young entrepreneur himself, with limited investing experience and no clout in Silicon Valley. He'd sold his Vermont-based Web-hosting company and was working at a nonprofit, developing technology for cataract blindness in India. This made him exactly the kind of outsider Google was looking for. "Bill was ready to come at this from an entirely new perspective," says David Drummond, who, as Google's chief legal officer and senior vice president of corporate development, oversees Google Ventures as well as the company's other investment vehicles.

Google Ventures has close to \$2 billion in assets under management, with stakes in more than 280 startups. Each year, Google gives Maris \$300 million in new capital, and this year he'll have an extra \$125 million to invest in a new European fund. That puts Google Ventures on a financial par with Silicon Valley's biggest venture firms, which typically put to work \$300 million to \$500 million a year. According to data compiled by CB Insights, a research firm that tracks venture capital activity, Google Ventures was the fourth-most-active venture firm in the U.S. last year, participating in 87 deals.

A company with \$66 billion in annual revenue isn't doing this for the money. What Google needs is entrepreneurs. "It needs to know where the puck is heading," says Robert Peck, an analyst at the investment bank SunTrust Robinson Humphrey, who published a report in February examining Google's outside investment units, including Google Ventures. "Look at what happened to BlackBerry when it missed the advent of smartphones.

And Yahoo! missed Facebook."

Google puts huge resources into looking for what's coming next. It spends millions on projects like Google X, the internal lab that developed Google Glass and is working on driverless cars. In January, the company made a \$900 million investment in Elon Musk's SpaceX. In 2014, it started Google Capital to invest in later-stage technology companies. Maris's views on the intersection of technology and medicine fit in well here: Google has spent hundreds of millions of dollars backing a research center, called Calico, to study how to reverse aging, and Google X is working on a pill that would insert nanoparticles into our bloodstream to detect disease and cancer mutations.

Maris has a peculiar position in the Googlesphere. He's a part of it, but also free from it. Google Ventures is set up differently than most other in-house corporate venture funds—Intel Capital, Verizon Ventures, and the like. The firm makes its investments independent of its parent's corporate strategy. It can back any company it wants, whether or not it fits with Google's plans. The fund also can sell its stakes to whomever it wants, including Google competitors. Facebook and Yahoo have bought startups funded by Google Ventures.

With Google's money and clout behind him, Maris has a huge amount of freedom. He can, and does, go after Silicon Valley's most-sought-after startups. Uber, Nest, and Cloudera are