

# FUTURE NEWS

TO CONNECT, TO INFORM AND TO INSPIRE

## IN THIS EDITION

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## Special Notice

Members may recall the lead story in the April 2014 edition of Future News detailing the Teach the Future initiative created by American Futurist educator Peter Bishop. More details of the initiative can be found here: <http://teachthefuture.org/>

Peter has initiated a crowd funding campaign to fund future development of the initiative. If you, or someone you know would like to make a contribution, more details can be found here:

<http://startsomegood.com/teachthefuture>





## Perspective-taking Another essential life skill

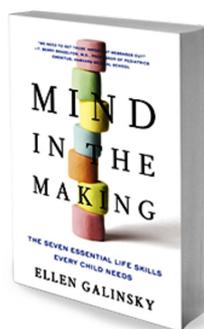
More than seeing things from a different point of view, help your children learn perspective taking through everyday activities.

by Gail Innis, Michigan State University Extension

How I wish that people could read my mind. Wouldn't life be simpler if people knew what you wanted and then acted accordingly? How exciting it would be to have a child know how things were going from your point of view and instinctively know when you are sad, frustrated or overwhelmed.

Being able to see things from another's point of view is sometimes referred to as perspective

taking and is an important life skill. Author Ellen Galinsky reminds us that teaching life skills to children can be just as important as teaching school readiness



skills. In her book, "Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills that Every Child Needs", she highlights the life skill of perspective taking. As an adult who may influence young children, it is good to pause and think about what perspective taking actually means.

Perspective taking is not an easy skill to master and very young children often don't understand that others have feelings and experiences different from their own. Perspective taking develops over time and improves as children mature, as it involves multiple parts of the brain, each responsible for a different task.

To see something from someone else's point of view, you first need to detect how that person is thinking and feeling. You must also summon up the stockpile of knowledge you have about that

person. This skill involves some analysis of the current situation and remembering what you have heard about similar situations. You may need to set aside your own feelings about the matter at hand and try to feel and think as someone else does.

Because there are so many different thinking tasks involved in trying to take the perspective of someone else, children are better able to process this kind of information as they grow and develop, eventually realizing that two people may experience the same situation in different ways.

How can we begin to teach the process to young children? Happily, your opportunities are many! Perspective taking can be taught through daily interactions and the behavior we model for our youth.

Michigan State University Extension suggests several easy ways to assist your children in building their perspective-taking skills:

Introduce your child to human situations that are unlike his own. You might discuss that there are people who cannot see and play a game where you take turns using a blindfold. The old children's game of Pin the Tail on the Donkey is one way to teach about those without sight. You could also sing with your child and have him try to cover his mouth during song to reflect how people who are unable to speak might feel.

Problem solve with your child. Children need to learn there is more than one way, or one idea, that can solve a problem or issue. Brainstorm with her and discuss the many ways she might approach a problem. "I see you're frustrated

with your friend who took that toy from you. Can you think of some ways you might be able to solve the problem without hitting him the next time?

Use "I" messages to show you recognize your child's emotions. "I see you are angry because your field trip was cancelled." When you recognize and name their emotion, they are learning they can trust and rely on you for comfort.

Give feelings a name. Use children's books to assist in teaching the many names of feelings. Some books that are a good place to start include *My Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss or *On Monday When It Rained* by Cheryl Kachenmeister.

Talk about your own feelings and those of your child. Let your child know if you need some time to yourself. "I think I need a few minutes to sit and think right now." Children need to know others may have feelings different from their own at any given time.

Explore opportunities in your community where you can expose your child to many different people and perspectives.

Looking for more tools and resources to help develop perspective taking? Seek out information from children's books and activities, as well as other tools for families that can assist in building life skills.

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[http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/perspective\\_taking\\_another\\_essential\\_life\\_skill](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/perspective_taking_another_essential_life_skill)



# FUTURISTS IN ACTION

## Four South East Queensland City Futures Initiatives

by Colin Russo

Coordinator Community Consultation and Engagement, Office of the CEO, City of Gold Coast and student at University of the Sunshine Coast

Futurist Colin Russo recently published an analysis of four visioning projects conducted by different local governments in the south east of Queensland<sup>1</sup>



All four of these projects were conducted between 2003 and 2009 and were facilitated by (differing) teams of futurists (though the work of Sohail Inayatullah<sup>3</sup> informed all four of them).

Russo analysed each of the projects in detail, using the Causal Layered Analysis methodology pioneered by Sohail Inayatullah.

He looked in detail at why each project was initiated. Examples include:

“... it was an opportunity to develop new levels of empowerment, knowledge, and trust, between local government and the wider community” (Steve Gould consultant to the Maroochy Visioning Journey).

“An opportunity to fulfil the desire to build on Logan City’s strong community spirit and protect natural assets such as parks and bushland. It was also an opportunity to move from being of regional significance to one recognised for global connections” (from an internal Logan City Council document).

“Take steps to ensure success in an uncertain future; Prepare to respond to emerging and unknown challenges; Lead the Gold Coast Community towards a successful common future; Be visionary and intuitive about the future of the city; Develop a common view of our preferred future; Align the city’s actions and plans under a common view of the future; Formulate robust plans that all the city’s stakeholders know and understand; Develop partnerships to deliver those plans; Consider further actions to lead the planning and delivery of our city’s future” (from an internal Gold Coast City Council document).

“a landmark evocation of Brisbane’s exciting future, with eight themes each revealing a special factor of, and ambitions for, our City” (from an internal Brisbane City Council document).

Russo looked in detail at the planning and community engagement processes employed within each of the municipalities and identified the presence of a futurist and the use of established futures methodologies as critical to the success of each.

He concluded:

“Critical to the whole City futures initiative is engagement of stakeholders early in initiative phases of aims, engagement and development of outcomes. This creates the best conditions for cohesiveness and carries additional social capital and stakeholder interests through the Visioning process into City and Council practices. Official initiative aims that can be recorded through Council and Committee resolutions can help all initiative stakeholders to understand, prepare and refine the intended program, but this begins with expert City futurist consultant involvement that is best sustained throughout the initiative.”

This article is particularly timely because an increasing number of local municipalities are engaging

in future visioning exercises as they seek to create a future environment meeting the needs of all stakeholders.

Russo noted:

“City futures initiatives are uniquely positioned to map and transfer community values into long term cycles of planning that better assist Cities to prioritise actions for the long term. The three regional Cities struggled more with this mainly because long term City futures thinking and processes rested with the commencement of new political cycles.”

He summed up his paper:

“A long term change process includes mapping of City views and each City has managed to achieve at least that. This shows that City futures can lead to better strategy when all critical factors are considered. Critical factors of the four initiatives emerge through the use of critical futures tools and methods and Maroochy was highly successful at doing this, however it remains an example of the need for experienced City futures leadership to be involved in more aspects of the initiative from inception to completion.”

and he flagged the production of a future paper designed to look even more critically at the success of each project:

“Factors critical to City Futures initiatives that are unique, universal and that were unmet by the City Futures initiatives are more critically compared in a second paper.”

Russo’s article was published in the February edition of the Journal of Future Studies and a full copy of the paper can be requested from the futures foundation office.

1. The full article can be read here : Journal of Futures Studies, March 2015, 19(3): 29-48
2. Maroochy Shire Council is now part of the Sunshine Coast Council
3. more information about the work of Sohail Inayatullah can be found at: [www.metafuture.org](http://www.metafuture.org)

# Book Review

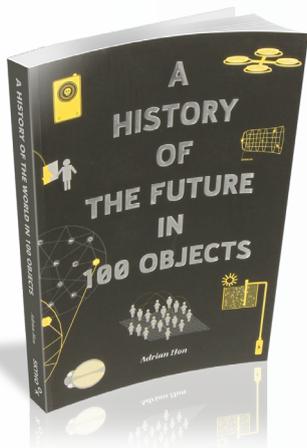
by Charles Brass – Chair, futures foundation

## A History of the Future in 100 Objects

by Adrian Hon

Published by Skyhook, 2013

In 2010 the BBC and the British National History Museum collaborated on a TV series called: “A History of the World in 100 Objects”. A year later a book with the same title was published and it stimulated a former neuroscientist turned computer gamer, Adrian Hon, to contemplate publishing “A History of the Future in 100 Objects.”



In true twenty-first century fashion, he announced his intention on Kickstarter (a crowd funding internet platform) and over 100 people pledged money to support the project. The book was eventually published in 2013.

This is not an easy book to review because it contains an idiosyncratic collection of 100 ideas about things which may happen over the next 70 years (it is written from the perspective of an author in 2082 looking back over the twenty first century).

Unlike the original, Hon's history of the future includes many non-physical objects, in part because notions of virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) dominate the book (19 objects are unambiguously VR and 3 are evidence of a public backlash against VR).

Hon's objects explore global society - #19 tells of the rebellion in 2025 of the poor against their increased isolation from the rich; #15 describes the Saudi Spring of 2027; #43 the awarding of the Steward medal to the most trustworthy people on the planet and #73 the differing durations of marriage contracts available in 2026.

Climate change makes three distinct appearances (#74, #92 and #94), as do five different new sports (Cross ball with robots #20; Desir the sex game #32; Tianxia (using VR to recreate ancient civilizations) #63; Super Thermal (bringing gaming into the real world) #65 and the enhanced Olympics #63.

#90 is a letter from a bored 9 year old on Mars, reminding us that kids and childhood aren't expected to change much, and #2 describes Specky a new toy which combines VR with real human puppeteers.

For those entrepreneurs looking for ideas for the 'next big thing', there are many options – ranging from virtual aids to the sick and lonely (#86) through deliverbots (#10), smart drugs (#6) and cloned food (#41) to planetary terraforming (cooling Venus #97).

Hon envisages pills designed to create better Christians (#70), personality editing (#55) (one of four objects devoted to jails, crime and prisoners), euphoric gastronomy – combining food with experience (#64) and a guaranteed minimum income for all citizens to combat unemployment (#80 and #81).

However, bar far the most dominant theme is the evolution of virtual reality and its spread into all areas of our lives. Glyphish (#16) for example, is a system designed to convert physical gestures into symbols by means of electromyography sensors woven into actively clothing (#36); which is made redundant in 2034 by neural laces (#47) and total digital memory (#58) which allow the entire contents of human brains to be downloaded and activated virtually. Instant ubiquitous

translation arrives in 2029 through the Curve of Babel (#29) – and results in an unexpected explosion of new languages.

Mimic Scripts (#13) emerge as early as 2022, giving people a way to apparently be present at virtual meetings while actually doing something else (think of these as sophisticated extensions of the avatars now used in computer games).

The ethics of VR is explored in a number of different ways. Moral Agents (#91) are intended to help people to decide right thing to do in difficult situations. #52 explores how VR has been used to manipulate the election of US presidents, and #72 describes how people who are not liked are 'downvoted' and drop out of society.

Hon even muses whether our entire existence might not be a simulation inside someone else's computer (#99) and how we might break out of this prison and join our maker on other worlds (#100).

A history of the future in 100 objects has an associated website - [ahistoryofthefuture.org](http://ahistoryofthefuture.org) which is perhaps the best way to explore it. Few people are likely to read it from cover to cover, it is more likely to be explored thematically depending on the interests of the reader.

Writing future histories is one thing futurists do, and it is clear that Hon has enjoyed the freedom to explore what might happen in the future.

Perhaps the last word might go to Coca Cola, whose distinctive bottle didn't make the list of 100 key object (despite being rated many times as the most iconic design of the twentieth century) but who in 2038 either paid a fortune, or hacked innumerable networks, no-one is quite sure, to create the most global advertisement ever seen (#60).

# Signals in the Noise

## BILL GATES PREDICTS THE FUTURE – TWICE

Probably not surprisingly given who Bill Gates is, he is regularly asked for his predictions about the future. Recently the Smithsonian Institution and Business Insider Australia have looked back at his predictions and compared them with what we see today.

The Smithsonian looked at predictions made by Mr Gates in 1987 (these were first reported in the January 1987 edition of the now defunct OMNI magazine – copies of which are available to be borrowed from the futures foundation library).

First, Gates anticipates the typical home of 2007:

“You’re sitting at home. You have a variety of image libraries that will contain, say, all the world’s best art. You’ll also have very cheap, flat panel-display devices throughout your house that will provide resolution so good that viewing a projection will be like looking at an original oil painting. It will be that realistic.”

Then Gates predicts the perfection of a technology that has been around for decades, but one that many people of 2015 might associate with the name Siri: voice recognition:

“Also, we will have serious voice recognition. I expect to wake up and say, “Show me some nice Da Vinci stuff,” and my ceiling, a high-resolution display, will show me what I want to see—or call up any sort of music or video. The world will be online, and you will be able to simulate just about anything.”

Gates continues by explaining that you’ll be able to realistically simulate racing formula cars in Daytona but worries what it might mean when people no longer have any reason to leave the house:

“There’s a scary question to all this: How necessary will it be to go to real places or do real things? I mean, in 20 years we will synthesize reality. We’ll do it super-realistically and in real time. The machine will check its database and think of some stories you might tell, songs you might sing, jokes you might not have heard before.”

Gates believed that all of our technological advancements would also mean the end of credit cards and checks — old technologies replaced by voice and fingerprint recognition.

A lot of things are going to vanish from our lives:

“There will be a machine that keys off of physiological

traits, whether it’s voiceprint or fingerprint, so credit cards and checks — pretty flimsy deals anyway — have to go.”

Gates also welcomed the death of what he calls “passive entertainment:

“I hope passive entertainment will disappear. People want to get involved. It will really start to change the quality of entertainment because it will be so individualized. If you like Bill Cosby, then there will be a digital description of Cosby, his mannerisms and appearance, and you will build your own show from that.”

Later in the article Gates is cautious and believes that we may eventually test just how much information the human mind can take:

“Probably all this progress will be pretty disruptive stuff. We’ll really find out what the human brain can do, but we’ll have serious problems about the purpose of it all. We’re going to find out how curious we are and how much stimulation we can take. There have been experiments in which a monkey can choose to ingest cocaine and the monkey keeps going to create some pretty intense experiences through synthesized video-audio. Do you think you’ll reach a point of satisfaction when you no longer have to try something new or make something better? Life is really going to change; your ability to access satisfying experiences will be so large.”

Gates ends his article by explaining that he doesn’t think we can really extrapolate with much accuracy from the year 1987:

“But in the next 20 years you won’t be able to extrapolate the rate of progress from any previous pattern or curve because the new chips, these local intelligences that can process information, will cause a warp in what it’s possible to do. The leap will be unique. I can’t think of any equivalent phenomenon in history.”

The full article (including videos of the interview with Bill Gates) can be found here:

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/1987-predictions-from-bill-gates-siri-show-me-da-vinci-stuff-500/>

In 1999 Bill Gates made another 15 predictions which have recently been reviewed.

### #1 Price comparison sites

**Gates' prediction:** 'Automated price comparison services will be developed, allowing people to see prices across multiple websites, making it effortless to find the cheapest product for all industries.'

**What we see now:** You can easily search for a product on Google or Amazon and get different prices of the same product. Sites like NextTag and PriceGrabber are built specifically for price comparisons.

### #2 Mobile devices



**Gates' prediction:** "People will carry around small devices that allow them to constantly stay in touch and do electronic business from wherever they are. They will be able to check the news, see flights they have booked, get information from financial markets, and do just about anything else on these devices.'

**What we see now:** Smartphones, and now smartwatches, do this for most people.

### #3 Instant payments and financing online, better healthcare through the web

**Gates' prediction:** 'People will pay their bills, take care of their finances, and communicate with their doctors over the Internet.'

**What we see now:** Tech hasn't been able to change healthcare all that much, but there are sites like ZocDoc that makes finding a doctor and scheduling easier. You can now borrow money online through sites like Lending Club, and easily make payments through sites like PayPal and Venmo.

### #4 Personal assistants and the Internet of Things

**Gates' prediction:** "Personal companions' will be developed. They will connect and sync all your devices in a smart way, whether they are at home or in the

office, and allow them to exchange data. The device will check your email or notifications, and present the information that you need. When you go to the store, you can tell it what recipes you want to prepare, and it will generate a list of ingredients that you need to pick up. It will inform all the devices that you use of your purchases and schedule, allowing them to automatically adjust to what you're doing.'

**What we see now:** Google Now, a smart assistant that runs on mobile devices, is starting to head in this direction. Meanwhile, smart devices like Nest collect data on your daily routines and automatically adjust the house temperature. Beacons will send you store coupons based on your past purchasing habits.

### #5 Online home-monitoring

**Gates' prediction:** 'Constant video feeds of your house will become common, which inform you when somebody visits while you are not home.'

**What we see now:** Dropcam sells home surveillance cameras that make home-monitoring easy. Google bought the company for \$US555 million in 2014.

### #6 Social media

**Gates' prediction:** 'Private websites for your friends and family will be common, allowing you to chat and plan for events.'

**What we see now:** Social media sites like Facebook and Instagram take care of this.

### #7 Automated promotional offers

**Gates' prediction:** 'Software that knows when you've booked a trip and uses that information to suggest activities at the local destination. It suggests activities, discounts, offers, and cheaper prices for all the things that you want to take part in.'

**What we see now:** Travel sites like Expedia and Kayak offer deals based on past purchase data. Google and Facebook ads can offer promotional ads based on the user's location and interests.

### #8 Live sports discussion sites

**Gates' prediction:** 'While watching a sports competition on television, services will allow you to discuss what is going on live, and enter contest where you vote on who you think will win.'

**What we see now:** A bunch of social media sites allow this, with Twitter being the clear leader. You can leave comments in real-time on sports sites like ESPN.

### #9 Smart advertising



**Gates' prediction:** 'Devices will have smart advertising. They will know your purchasing trends, and will display advertisements that are tailored toward your preferences.'

**What we see now:** Most online advertising services have this feature now, where advertisers can target users based on click history, personal interest, purchasing patterns.

### #10 Links to sites during live TV

**Gates' prediction:** 'Television broadcast will include links to relevant websites and content that complement what you are watching.'

**What we see now:** Almost every live sports game have ads featuring links to a specific site. They also show the teams' Twitter handles in some cases.

### #11 Online discussion boards

**Gates' prediction:** 'Residents of cities and countries will be able to have Internet-based discussions concerning issues that affect them, such as local politics, city planning or safety.'

**What we see now:** Most news sites have comment sections where people can have live discussions, while many sites have forums where people can ask and respond to certain questions. Twitter and Facebook played roles in political revolutions in Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia.

### #12 Interest-based online sites

**Gates' prediction:** "Online communities will not be influenced by your location, but rather, your interest."

**What we see now:** There's all kinds of news sites and online communities focused on single topics. Many news sites expand to separate verticals, offering more in-depth coverage on a given topic.

### #13 Project management software



**Gates' prediction:** 'Project managers looking to put a team together will be able to go online, describe the project, and receive recommendations for available people who would fit their requirements.'

**What we see now:** There's tons of workflow software in the enterprise space that's revolutionising how you recruit, form teams, and assign work to others.

### #14 Online recruiting

**Gates' prediction:** 'Similarly, people looking for work will be able to find employment opportunities online by declaring their interest, needs, and specialised skills.'

**What we see now:** Sites like LinkedIn allow users to upload their resumes and find jobs based on individual interest and needs. Recruiters can search based on their specialised skills.

### #15 Business community software

**Gates' prediction:** 'Companies will be able to bid on jobs, whether they are looking for a construction project, a movie production, or an advertising campaign. This will allow them to outsource work that they don't usually face, businesses looking for new clients, and corporations that don't have a go-to provider for the said service.'

**What we see now:** Many enterprise softwares are focused on the social aspect of it, so that users can reach out to other businesses and start a conversation that could lead to bigger projects directly within their apps.

Thanks to Eugene Kim from Business Insider Australia for this analysis:

<http://www.businessinsider.com.au/bill-gates-15-predictions-in-1999-2015-4?op=1#1-price-comparison-sites-1>