Science Fiction or Science Fact?

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Every month I read countless articles looking for ideas for this column. As this industry continues to evolve and grow, I'm amazed at the out-of-the-box thinking that produces innovations that change our lives. Throughout history great thinkers have dared to challenge the status quo in order to bring their inventions, no matter how far-fetched, to society. But, I wonder how many of these innovative ideas were built upon based on science fiction stories?

At the risk of dating myself, I am a &quotJetson&quot kid. Astro going for his daily walk on a treadmill suspended in mid air... Jane having a computer do her hair, make up and choose her clothes... Rosie the robot housekeeper... George driving his space car... Elroy flying around the house with his jetpack... you get the picture. Just this morning, *Good Morning America* did a segment on appliances of the future, including a refrigerator that has a PC screen in the door, and will cook your meals for you. I thought refrigerators were supposed to keep food cold? While we do have some of the Jetson luxuries, it seems hard to imagine that some of their conveniences would ever happen in the near future. Then, I came across some news items that made me think that may be science fiction wasn't going to stay fiction for long.

&quotScience Fact&quot is just around the corner. As the consumers continue to demand smaller, lighter, faster, cheaper, more functionality out of the technology sector, getting pictures and video on your cell phone or PDA will seem antiquated. Two British engineers have come up with the 'tooth phone.' During routine dental surgery, a tiny vibrator and a radio wave receiver can be implanted into a tooth. Sound comes into the tooth as a radio signal and is transferred to the tooth via bone resonance. This will allow calls to be received any time and anywhere &#151 and no one else can hear the conversation.

How about reading your email and accessing the Internet or watching DVDs from

your eyeglasses? Not only will eyeglasses correct your vision in the future, but also they will provide a floating image in front of the user when turned on. When turned off they will function as plain old eyeglasses do today.
Infineon Technologies also sees a future in bringing science fiction to reality. They have presented prototypes of functional &quotSmart Clothing.&quot Using the application of sensors and chips enclosed in special packages that are adhered right to the textile fabrics, while conductive materials are woven into the fabric to provide the necessary electrical connection. By integrating an audio module into clothing, an MP3 player can be designed into the clothing. The components are designed so that the clothes are comfortable, easy to use and can be washed without removing the electronics. Infineon is exploring product development for &quotsmart&quot clothing with integrated mobile phones, Bluetooth or GPS functionality for communications, or even security applications. This could open up a whole new venue for electronic entertainment, healthcare, and many other applications.
While some of these out-of-the-box ideas may seem like they are straight out of the latest James Bond movie, they are closer to reality than we think. These innovations, and others like them, will revolutionize the world, and provide societies with the conveniences George Jetson enjoyed.

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