Catching up to the future

The author connects Ray Kurzweil’s predictions of a technological merger of computers and humans to changes in journalism and media. The result is a science fiction-like world of robots, cranial implants, telekinesis and more.

Research assignments at three levels:

**Flashlight:** Ask students to watch inventor Ray Kurzweil’s “The accelerating power of technology” or Kevin Kelly’s “The next 5,000 days of the web” TED talks. In a paper or blog, students would answer these questions: Have some of their predictions already been realized? Will machines make us immortal? What would be the pros and cons of a news environment in the world Kurzweil and Kelly foresee? Use additional sources as needed.

**Spotlight:** MIT Media Lab leader Joichi Ito focuses not on immortality but on what humans should do when he looks at how technology best helps us innovate. In a paper or blog, ask students to take Ito’s stance. Why is he right to say technology is not all about efficiency? What do you think of his notion that the Internet is a “belief system?” Does your school nurture the same skills and beliefs as MIT does with its students? Is your entrepreneurial drive appreciated?

**Searchlight:** Ask students to explore these links:

- Guardian CEO outlines digital future of news and media industry
- Forbes: Tech companies 'control the future of news'
- The Economist Ideas Arena: The Future of News
- Poynter: AP will use robots to write some business stories

In a paper, ask students to imagine they are a journalist in the year 2020. Taking into account the readings above as well as the current chapter of this book, answer these questions: What will your daily routine be like? What are some concrete things you can do to prepare yourself for the future?

What challenges will you face?

**Extra credit:** How will news be paid for in the future? Look at sites like Kickstarter, WeFunder and AngelList. Are the media projects funded through these platforms futuristic? Develop a crowd-funding pitch for a form of media that doesn’t yet exist.