Editorial: Time to Think about Artificial Intelligence. New Scientist. April 23, 2005 (www.newscientist.com). “AI pervades our world and may soon start evolving faster than humans can track it—in whose hands should this awesome power reside? When it comes to emerging technologies, we know what we’re afraid of, even though we may not know why. There is no shortage of public debate about genetically modified crops, nanotechnology and cloning. And policy makers have responded: many countries have laws that restrict the way these technologies can be used. So why the deafening silence about the potential dangers of artificial intelligence? Here is a technology that is already changing the world: AI is used in everything from guided missiles to air-traffic control. It is not yet ‘intelligent’ in the human sense, but that looks likely to change.”

‘Dormouse’ Retells Silicon Valley History. Opinion by Chris Nolan. eWeek. April 20, 2005 (www.eeweek.com). “A new book chronicles the development of computer culture in political terms, showing that computer programmers were always aware of the world outside the office—or the Valley. ... [John] Markoff’s What the Dormouse Said: How the 60s Counterculture Shaped the Computer Industry—the title’s from Jefferson Airplane’s ‘White Rabbit,’ a paean to pills and other substances—details the valley’s early history, which involves computers, LSD, some marijuana and a lot of time in hot tubs and saunas, not to mention the occasional acts of civil disobedience and arrests for protesting against the Vietnam War. ... In this book they attend raucous parties, do a fair amount of LSD, smoke a goodly amount of marijuana and generally razz-le-dazzle, not just with machines but with household names from the era like Ken Kesey and the Grateful Dead. ‘If you were inside someplace like SAIL, (the Stanford Artificial Intelligence Lab) it’s a very social world,’ says Markoff of one of the institutions that fostered these men and their work. ‘It’s a different kind of sociability.’ ... All them share a few common understandings, primary among them that technology can—and should—make a difference in people’s lives. Accompanying that belief is the conviction that technology will almost always change people’s lives for the better.”

The Origins of Cyberspace—A Library on the History of Computing, Networking, and Telecommunications. Christie’s. Auction date: February 23, 2005 (www.christies.com). Items being auctioned include: Edmund C. Berkeley’s Giant Brains or Machines that Think; Karel Capek’s R.U.R. Rossum’s Universal Robots; John McCarthy’s Programs with Common Sense; Allen Newell, John Clifford Shaw and Herbert A. Simon’s Chess-playing Programs and the Problem of Complexity; Arthur Lee Samuel’s Some Studies in Machine Learning Using the Game of Checkers; Claude E. Shannon’s A Symbolic Analysis of Relay and Switching Circuits; Alan Mathison Turing’s On Computable Numbers with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem; and a reel of half-inch wide nickel-coated bronze tape for use in the UNIVAC I.

Latest from MIT: Artificial Stupidity. Jay Fitzgerald. Boston Herald. April 14, 2005 (business.bostonherald.com). “Welcome to wack-adelphia. Fed up with invitations to submit papers for science conferences, three MIT students devised a software program that deliberately churned out nonsensical scientific gibberish. Now one of their computer-generated ‘papers’ has been accepted by a Florida conference. Their fake report—‘Rooter: A Methodology for the Typical Unification of Access Points and Redundancy’—is intended to show that many so-called academic conferences have few or no minimum standards. The gatherers’ purpose: simply to make money. ‘We decided to test the limits,’ said Jeremy Stibring, a graduate student at MIT’s Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Lab in Cambridge.”

The items in this collage were selected from the AI TOPICS Web site’s “AI in the News” collection that can be found—complete with links to the item’s source and related AI TOPICS pages—at www.aaai.org/aitopics/html/current.html. Please note that: (1) an exempt may not reflect the overall tenor of the item, nor contain all of the relevant information; and, (2) all items are offered "as is" and the fact that an item has been selected does not imply any endorsement whatsoever. – Jon Glick, Webmaster, AI TOPICS