Column

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Editor's Note: We Need to Find an IT Celebrity. Peter Whitehead. *FT.com*. September 19, 2007 (www.ft.com). "If IT wants to attract bright youngsters, one thing it might do is find a celebrity champion—real or fictional—to give an idea of what working in IT really involves and where it can lead. Unfortunately, some role models, such as the IT experts in the absurd but compelling thriller series *24*, tend to be oddball characters. Being at the cutting edge of artificial intelligence, robotics, mobility, and so on, ought to be an exciting prospect for any student. But the overall message reaching them is muddled and unappealing. Perhaps the search for an IT champion should begin."

Future of Science—"We Will Have the Power of the Gods"—A leading theoretical physicist has tapped the best scientific brains of the age to provide a startling vision of the future. Roger Highfield. *Telegraph*. October 23, 2007 (www. telegraph.co.uk). "According to the theoretical physicist Professor Michio Kaku of the City College of New York, we are entering an empowered new era: 'We have unlocked the secrets of matter. We have unravelled the molecule of life, DNA. And we have created a form of artificial intelligence, the computer. We are making the historic transition from the age of scientific discovery to the age of scientific mastery in which we will be able to manipulate and mould nature almost to our wishes.' … In a new BBC4 series called *Visions of the Future,* Prof. Kaku talks to today's pioneers about how we are moving from being passive observers of nature to its choreographers: '… As a species, we are starting to put our information-processing technology inside our bodies — we're becoming a little more robotic.' [Rodney Brooks, MIT]. '… There's a good chance that the machines will be smarter than us.' [Paul Saffo, Stanford]. ' … We have a choice in how we create artificial intelligence.' [Eliezer Yudkowsky, Singularity Institue]."

A Discussion about Emerging Technologies with Esther Dyson of EDventure [video]. *Charlie Rose Show*. August 14, 2007 (www.charlierose.com). "[34:25] Charlie Rose: You don't think our best years are behind us, do you? Esther Dyson: They could be. … CR: OK. So tell me how loudly you want to say it. That our best years are behind us because we're not training enough people whose busi-

ness it is, profession it is: scientists, mathematicians, computer tech scientists, all of that, that, we are not creating the same — *ED:* Intelligentsia. *CR:* Brain power, you know, as Gates famously always says, we put enough IQ on this problem, we can figure it out. *ED:* It's not just IQ. It's respect for science. It's respect for scientific inquiry. People don't understand how things work and they're not interested. There's a — it's not even a fascination, it's too passive. … [36:28] *CR:* Here is my last question, although it is too big for — to be a last question. How far away are we from artificial intelligence? *ED:* How far away are we from intelligence? *CR:* Artificial intelligence. *ED:* No, intelligence. *CR:* Yes. Are you asking me? *ED:* Yes. Artificial intelligence, there is — we've already got a whole lot of expert systems. How far are we away from—*CR:* That can play chess and do all those kinds of things, is that what you're saying? *ED:* How far away are we from self-aware intelligence? *CR:* Yes. OK. Yes. That's why I'm asking you the question, my dear, that you'll make all of these distinctions for me so I can get my hands around it. *ED:* It's a question that is being asked, and even if we get it, will we know? Suppose Google started talking to us. … If Google was self-aware, what would it say?"

When Robots Roam the Earth— Sometime this century, artificial intelligence may become its own species. Society will need new rules to cope. The Monitor's View (Commentary). *The Christian Science Monitor*. August 8, 2007 (www. csmonitor.com). "What will be the first alien intelligence with which humans come into contact? Surprisingly, it won't come from another planet. Instead, these entities will be the work of humans — robots with an

artificial intelligence that will demand new rules about their roles in society. That's the conclusion of the European Robotics Research Network, which issued a 'Roboethics Roadmap' last spring. Sometime in this century, the group figures, robots will be considered intelligent enough — even self-aware, in some sense — to be considered a species all their own. 'It will be an event rich in ethical, social, and economic problems,' the group concludes. … In the United States, Reps. Mike Doyle (D) of Pennsylvania and Zack Wamp (R) of Tennessee have formed a Congressional Caucus on Robotics to look at 'this first great technology of the 21st century.' … Robot experts like to say that intelligence is intelligence, no matter what the material form. But that doesn't provide answers for tricky ethical questions. … Thinking about when a robot would be granted rights could help us better appreciate human rights."

What will Southampton be Like in Five Decades Time? Sarah Jones. *The Southern Daily Echo*. September 9, 2007 (www.dailyecho.co.uk). "Life as we know it is going to change in a big way, and Southampton University Professor of Artificial Intelligence, Nigel Shadbolt, thinks he can offer a glimpse of the shape of things to come. … In his role as President of the British Computer Society (BCS), Professor Shadbolt looked into his crystal ball with fellow leading academics to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the organisation. … According to Prof Shadbolt, his industry is on the cusp of one of the most momentous periods in the evolution of computer technology. 'The future of the planet and everybody on it is going to depend on computing and IT.' However, that does not mean that people are better informed about new developments in technology or what it will mean for their present day-to-day lives, according to the professor. 'As future technology becomes commonly accepted—satellite navigation for visually impaired people or voice-activated e-mail, perhaps—it becomes invisible, or at least taken for granted.' Herein, he believes, lies the challenge. 'When the BCS was set up in 1957, computer science was in its infancy and had limited appeal to a select group of people. Now we have the dual task of communicating with our members but also informing the public at large about the issues that surround IT use,' said Prof Shadbolt."