

🔊 [...] Isaac Asimov, one of the 20th Century's best-known science fiction authors, in 1964 published an essay predicting what our world would look like today. [...] Here's a look at 2014, through the eyes of 1964.

1. **"Communications will become sight-sound and you will see as well as hear the person you telephone."**

The first transcontinental video call between two places was made on 20 April 1964 using technology developed by Bell Systems (later Bell Laboratories), which may have partly inspired Asimov's prediction.



Isaac Asimov, 1970.

2. **It will be possible "for you to direct-dial any spot on earth, including the weather stations in Antarctica".**

3. **"Robots will neither be common nor very good in 2014, but they will be in existence."**

Asimov is credited with introducing the word robotics into the English language, so it is perhaps no surprise he was right in predicting that no real robot yet exists that can rival The Jetson's housemaid, Rosie—first brought to screen in 1962. [...]

4. **"As for television, wall screens will have replaced the ordinary set; but transparent cubes will be making their appearance in which three-dimensional viewing will be possible."**

One of the most notable aspects of Asimov's predictions is that he often nailed the technology, but overestimated the enthusiasm with which such technologies would be greeted.

5. **"Conversations with the Moon will be a trifle uncomfortable."**

Of course, Asimov was bound to have a few duds. The dawn of the Space Age might have made him a bit optimistic about communications with our Moon suburbs—calls would have a delay of 2.5 seconds, he thought—although he was spot on when he predicted that by 2014 "only unmanned ships will have landed on Mars". He did not, however, predict the Mars Curiosity's Twitter account.

6. **"Kitchen units will be devised that will prepare 'automeals', heating water and converting it to coffee."**

Automated coffee machines do indeed exist. Asimov's predictions that processed yeast and algae products would be available in a variety of flavours, including "mock-turkey" and "pseudo-steak", were semi-realised last year when scientists unveiled the first laboratory-grown burger. [...]

7. **"An experimental fusion-power plant or two will already exist."**

[...] Asimov's predictions about large solar-power stations in desert and semi-desert areas like Arizona and the Negev desert are accurate.

"World's Fair: Isaac Asimov's Predictions 50 Years On", Kim Gittleson, *BBC.com*, 2014.

a) Pick out the dates in the first paragraph. What do they correspond to?

b) What is the invention referred to?

c) Is this possible today? Thanks to which device?

d) Which word did Asimov invent? Why?

e) What could the wall screens he refers to be in today's world?

f) What was Asimov better at predicting? Compared to what?

g) What did he predict about Mars? Was he right?

h) Can you find in today's world devices which correspond to this item? Justify.

i) Which invention was he wrong about?