



How Does the Future Happen? Instant books, smart price tags and 3-D television: guessing the shape of things to come

Oct. 29 — **How does an idea move from a glimmer in an entrepreneur's eye to daily life? How does a technology consumer—be it chief information officer or gadget buff—know what's real and what's science fiction? Three ideas I saw earlier this month at the European Technology Roundtable in Seville were opportunities to mull those questions.**

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The third technology that caught my eye in Seville was both the most innovative and least likely to show up in real life anytime soon. HoloVizio is a true 3-D television display from an Hungarian company called [Holografika](#)—a technology so cool you just want to see it happen. The 3-D display looks like a normal twenty-five inch television monitor, except the changing images on screen—a human skull, a rib cage, a prototype automobile—appear to be truly 3-D, hanging in space behind the glass. As you move your head in front of the screen, the forward parts of the image block the pieces in the back. And unlike previous 3-D television technologies, you don't have to wear funny goggles. Similar work, on a smaller scale, is also being done at the MIT Media Lab, and these are clearly the first steps toward true three-dimensional television. The Holografika folk even promise a compatible 3-D television camera soon. But will it catch on? I've been watching various 3-D technologies for several decades now, and so far the concept is still firmly in the lab. Almost certainly, these kind of monitors will be useful in computer-aided design and architecture—you'll be able to draw a building or automobile and then see it rendered in true 3-D.

Only after years of professional use will the price of such hardware decline enough to be a consumer product. And even then, content providers will have to agree to produce their material in the new format. So when will we have 3-D television in the living room? If it ever happens, it will be long after print-on-demand books are commonplace—and those new 3-D sets will probably have LCD price tags, too. In short: as a consumer product, this is far, far in the future. But maybe that's just as well. After all, most of us are still saving up for high-definition television.

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