

## Designers of the Future

This column was written by my colleagues at the University of Maryland. They also happen to go to elementary schools in the local Maryland area, but they join me two afternoons a week in our Human-Computer Interaction Lab. For the past year they have been my design partners in making new technologies for children. They work with me, along with computer scientists, educators, and artists.

The other day I asked my colleagues (ages 7-10 years old) if they might want to contribute to the SIGCHI Bulletin. I explained that I thought it might be fun for them to share their thoughts with other people who think about kids and computers. They agreed, and so what follows are their thoughts about computers: what they want changed, what they like, and what they think should be possible in the future.

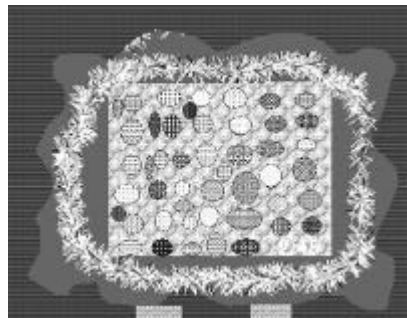
### Hanne Olsen, Age 10

My computer of the future will not look as boring as the computers of the present. It will be all different colors. It will be able to pick my own colors. It will be shiny. Instead of straight edges it will be wavy. The screen will be bigger. In the middle of the screen there is a colorful box with all of the icons. When you choose a program the box will disappear and return when you quit the program. I think my computer of the future will look much more interesting.

My computer of the future will be much more improved than the ones of today. It will have a lot more memory than now. We will be able to have a lot more programs in the future. My computer will *not* freeze. It will have its own memory and we can talk to it. It

will be sort of like a play mate. I like my computer of the future.

If someone used my computer of the future they would be impressed. They could use it for games, writing, and lots more. They could just talk to it and it would do what you say. It will only do what you say if you set it to do that. We could draw pictures on it. It would have a built in printer. It would have very good sound and picture. My computer is really impressive.



### Lauren Sumida, Age 7

My computer would help kids with math, science, reading and writing. My computer's name would be ANTI-DISESTABLISHMENTARIANISM! This computer could be named anything! It could walk behind you and watch you play and it can talk to you.



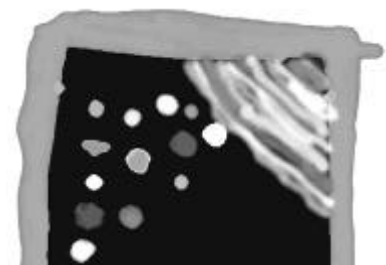
It can be different colors, it can be furry. You can work with it by pressing a key called WRK. It is small enough to fit in your pocket. It will do what ever you want it to do. You will have to walk it when it wants to. But it is not selfish. You have to take very special care of it. It tells you what time it is. If you are new with the computer it comes to life and helps you. It will tell you every single fact about the computer.

### Rebecca Wagner, Age 10

A computer of the future should be smarter, or at least mine should be.

When computers were first made they took up a whole room, and now they are smaller and can do more things. So in the future computers should be even better. I will expect to be able to do more and better things on computers of the future.

That was what I expect for the computers, but what I think what really counts is the software and programs that are on the computer. There should



be educational programs for children of all ages, not just children 3-7 years old, older children don't know everything. The programs on the computer should be better, they should not be

annoying, and have red and green squiggly lines. That is what I think about computers of the future.

**Isabella Revett, Age 7**



My computer will help kids interact with the world itself. The computer that you mite be using will have different buttons that you can choose from the different things you want to do. It will be portabel and can attach to almost anything! The mouse is a magnet!! Why I chose a magnet for a mouse? Because I like magnets...

**Alex Kruskal, Age 7**

You can put the computer in your pocit. You cant tear it off. You can fold the computer.



**Thomas Schwenn, Age 9**

In the future I hope that computers will be different because they need a few improvements. I hope the computers of the future will be portable (so they can fit in your pocket), faster but look like the way they do now.

The way a computer would be portable would be that it would fold up. The monitor (the same size as they are now) would fold into a small box, then the keyboard (with a built in mouse pad) would fold in half and attach to the monitor box, finally the CPU will be so small it will not require folding.

The way the speed would be altered is that the software would be changed. It would be changed by the government making a law that would not allow

programs that were too slow to be sold. I hope that these changes are made in the future.

[Note: Thomas decided he didn't want to draw the computer he was describing. He decided it wasn't necessary.]

#### **About the Author**

Allison Druin  
CHI-Bulletin-Kids@acm.org  
<http://www.umiacs.umd.edu/~allison/>  
University of Maryland, College Park  
Human-Computer Interaction Laboratory and College of Education  
allisond@umiacs.umd.edu  
office phone: 301-405-7406

*Allison Druin is a University of Maryland faculty member in the College of Education and the Human-Computer Interaction Laboratory (HCIL). She is editor of the new book, "The Design of Children's Technology recently published by Morgan Kaufmann."*