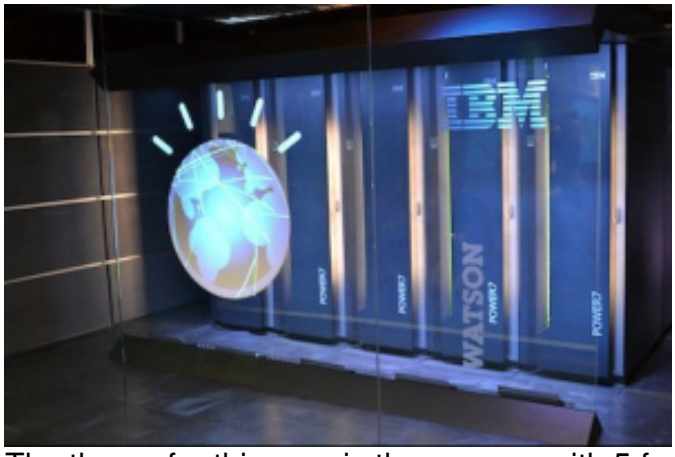
Vibrating touchscreens, impossibly sharp-eyed equipment, digital taste buds-- these are just three predictions from the 2012 edition of **The 5 in 5**, the yearly IBM list of future tech predictions for the next 5 years.



The theme for this year is the senses, with 5 forecast categories covering all human senses. Will the computers of the near future lend us **superhuman senses**? IBM believes so!

Touch: Touchscreens will provide a far more tactile experience than a sheet of glass, IBM predicts. Through infrared and haptic technologies, touchscreens will simulate the physical sensation of touch, such as "feeling" the texture of cloth through an on-screen catalog.

Sight: Image recognition systems will be far more capable, thanks to more advanced pattern analysis systems. Such technologies should find a wide variety of applications, from the recognition of subtle MRI patterns in healthcare to that of customer preferences on Pinterest-style image boards in retail.

Hearing: IBM believes computers need to be able to recognise the whole gamut of sound, from the frequency changes in bridges to the cries of a baby and, yes, even the proverbial tree falling in the forest. Such technology might be able to predict potential disasters, if not provide more accurate machine translations of spoken languages.

Taste: "Algorthmic recipes?" In the future, computers should be able to recognise different flavour-building compounds, allowing one to create "perfect" meals with both flavour and ideal

calorie counts.

Smell: A rather underrated sense, smell can have interesting future applications. These include smartphones with sensors able to "read" user health through breath molecules and the detection of miniscule amounts of environmental toxins. This might not be too far off, since an "electronic nose" able to tell where and when a bottle of wine was made already exists.

One might ask-- is the IBM oracle actually any accurate? The 5 in 5 list from 2007 lists improved smart grid technologies (in the works), mainstream adoption of driver-assist technologies (we're getting there), food traceability via RFID tags (the technology exists), mobile phones as "wallet, ticket broker, concierge, bank, shopping buddy and more" (current smartphones can do most of those functions) and Doctors with super-senses (haven't seen those yet!).

Four out of five, then... not too shabby, we have to admit, especially when compared with the n one-too-accurate 2006 version of the list
. But where are our jetpacks?

Go The Five in Five 2012