

Photo courtesy of Prelinger Library

That Was Then, This Is Now, Tomorrow Will Be Amazing!

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Take a stroll down memory lane, then gaze into a crystal ball with us. As we celebrate the TRB Centennial, let's take a look back at life in 1920, contemplate where we are today, and then consider what 2120 might hold.

In the Stands

The year 1920 was the inaugural season of the American Professional Football Association (the precursor of the National Football League) with the Akron Pros winning the

Above: "Mr. Loney on Line 1!" In 1920s offices across the country, receptionists—largely female—used multiline switchboards to route calls. Flip switches were assigned to a phone in each private office or department. The receptionist flipped one switch to answer the call, another to route it, and yet another to disconnect on her end.

title—and managing to do so without something called a halftime show. The Kansas City Chiefs won Super Bowl LIV in 2020, with Shakira and Jennifer Lopez performing the halftime extravaganza. The 2120 virtual Super Bowl was won for the first time by the Mars Martians, with the Ceres Rock Miners headlining the halftime show.

Keeping in Touch

Making a telephone call in 1920 involved connections through a manual switchboard and—likely—a party line with up to four phone numbers belonging to your neighbors (please don't listen in on those other conversations). Today, smartphones can do it all—talking, texting, video streaming, taking photos, and much more. By 2120, communication arrays the size of a pinhead are implanted at birth, providing truly 24/7 hands-free calling throughout life.

Staying Informed

You needed 2 cents to mail a first class letter in 1920, compared with 55 cents today. In 2120, what is a letter? And what is a postage stamp? The morning mail arrives electronically, drones deliver small packages, and large shipments are sent via autonomous freight pods.

Playtime

Crossword puzzles were the rage in 1920, with newspapers using the word games to boost daily sales. Children played with pogo sticks and yo-yos. Virtual gaming is the craze today, with e-sport leagues, tournaments, and championships. The hot game in 2120? Virtual curling, of course! The hot toy? Cabbage Patch robots reminiscent of the dolls of the late 1970s!

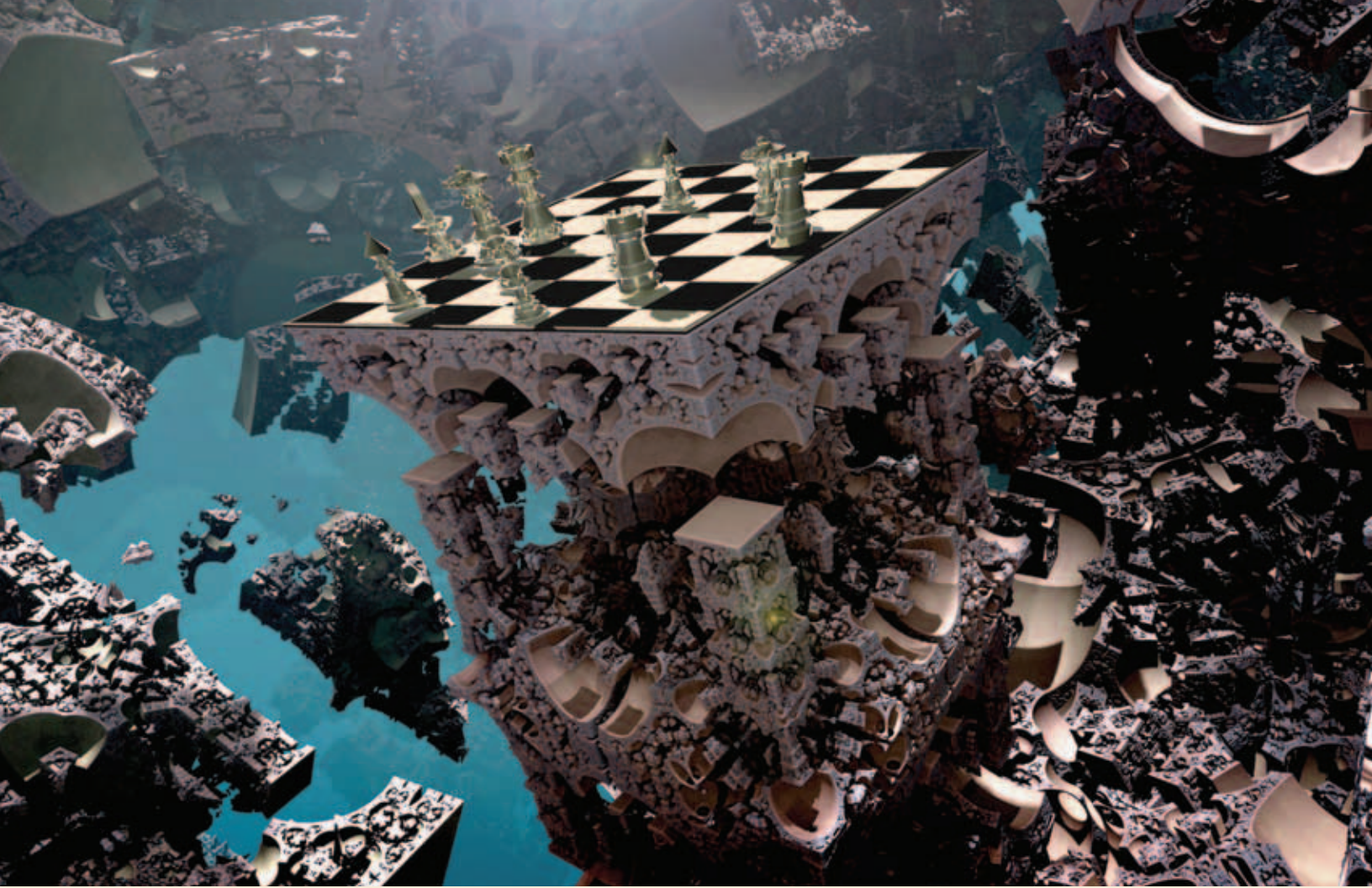


Photo: Pixabay

In today's virtual world, the castle can fall with the king in a game of chess.

Snack Time

The 1920s brought us Wonder Bread, Baby Ruth candy bars, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, Welch's Grape Jelly, Wheaties, and Yoo-Hoo chocolate drinks. New in 2020 are White Reese's Peanut Butter Cups Thins, KRAVE Plant-Based Jerky, Chocolate Marshmallow Oreos, Life's Grape Peanut Butter-Dipped Grapes, Post Hostess Twinkie Cereal, and Goldfish Veggie Crackers. New taste treats in 2120 include peanut butter jerky, grape jelly goldfish, and chocolate-covered seaweed cookies.

Feeding Our Minds

Books written in 1920 included *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* by Agatha Christie, *Main Street* by Sinclair Lewis, and *The Story of Doctor Doolittle: Being the History of His Peculiar Life at Home and Astonishing Adventures in Foreign Parts* by Hugh Lofting. *Walk the Wire* by David Baldacci, *If It Bleeds* by Stephen

King, and *Camino Winds* by John Grisham are new in 2020. Featured e-reading in 2120 includes *COVID-19: A Look Back 100 Years Later*, *The Mysterious Affair on the Moon*, and *Celebrating 200 Years of TRB*. Maybe human cloning will be a reality by 2120, and we can all be part of the TRB celebration after our original selves are long gone!

Getting Around

Men, women, and children all rode bicycles in 1920; and cycling clubs, bicycling tours, and velodrome racing were popular. The 1920 Summer Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium, included two bicycle road racing and four track racing events. Electric scooters were the rage in 2020, but e-scooter racing was not (yet) an Olympic sport. The hot transportation mode in 2120? From watching the *Jetsons* cartoon TV show as a kid, it has to be personal jet packs!

What do you see in *your* crystal ball?



Photo: Nationaal Archief of the Netherlands

Danger was in the details of the one-wheeled motorcycle, which took to the roads in the 1920s. This version, possibly invented by Italians Cislighi and Goventosa, was powered by a Garelli 350 engine and reached 93 miles per hour. But, speed and precarious balance made them unsafe for travel, and the innovation eventually was relegated to entertainment vehicles in circus clown corps.