

Points of Interest

Does Watching Colour Television Colour Our Dreams?

New research suggests that if you grew up watching a black-and-white television set, you probably dream in black and white. The evidence comes from Dundee, Scotland, where it is now being estimated that while almost all those under 25 years old dream in colour, thousands of those over 55 years of age dream in monochrome, still to this day.

Evan Shamoan *Switched* October 20, 2008 <http://www.switched.com/2008/10/20/does-watching-color-television-color-our-dreams/>

Calm People More Likely Liberals: Study

Calm people tend to be liberals, and those who react strongly to sudden noises and threatening images tend to be political conservatives, according to US researchers. "Individuals with measurably lower physical sensitivities to sudden noises and threatening visual images were more likely to support foreign aid, liberal immigration policies, pacifism, and gun control," said the study, published in *Science* magazine. "Individuals displaying measurably higher physiological reactions to those same stimuli were more likely to favor defence spending, capital punishment, patriotism, and the Iraq war."

National Post September 19, 2008 <http://www.nationalpost.com/related/topics/story.html?id=805534>

The Science of Gossip: Why We Can't Stop Ourselves

In recent years, researchers have turned to the study of gossip – our predilection for talking about people who are not present. Why is news about others so irresistible? As it turns out, gossip serves a useful social function in bonding group members together. In the distant past, when humans lived in small bands and meeting strangers was a rare occurrence, gossip helped us survive and thrive.

Frank T. McAndrew *Scientific American Mind* October 2008 <http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=the-science-of-gossip>

Social Skills Predict Future Earnings Better than Test Scores

Ten years after graduation, high-school students who had been rated as conscientious and co-operative by their teachers were earning more than classmates who had similar test scores but fewer social skills, a new University of Illinois study has found. The study's findings, appearing in the journal *Social Science Research*, challenge the notion that racial, ethnic and socioeconomic gaps in educational attainment and earnings can be narrowed solely by emphasizing cognitive skills.

Kate Melville *Science A GoGo* October 16, 2008 http://www.scienceagogo.com/news/20080915190634data_trunc_sys.shtml

The World Is Fat and Getting Fatter

At one time, overweight and obesity were viewed as a burden of affluence unique to those fortunate enough to live in societies where they could work at desk jobs and eat processed foods. Today, however, much of the world is afflicted with the health problems associated with overweight and obesity. The World Health Organization estimates that globally 1.6 billion adults over the age of 15 are overweight and at least 400 million adults are obese.

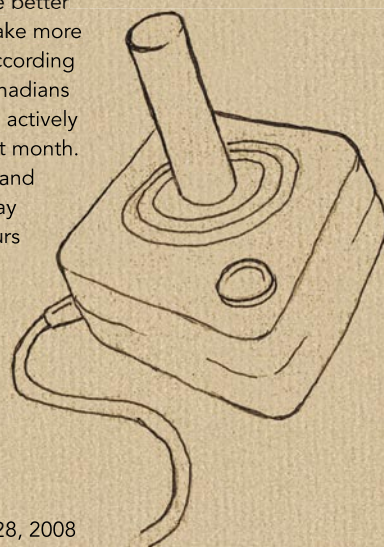
Suzanne Havala Hobbs *Healthcare Papers* October 2008 <http://www.longwoods.com/product.php?productid=20177>

Video Gamers High Earners, Athletic and Dating: Studies

People who play video games have better family lives, are more social and make more money than people who do not, according to two new studies. One in two Canadians can be considered a gamer, having actively played video games within the past month. The average age of a gamer is 40, and half are women. More than 82% play video games an average of 7.1 hours each week.

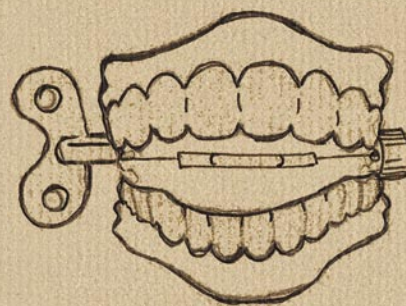
"Family gaming is becoming a big part of Canadian families' pastime. Mom, dad and the kids are all playing together," said Nicole Helsing, spokeswoman for the Entertainment Software Association of Canada.

Vito Pileci *National Post* October 28, 2008 <http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=914078>



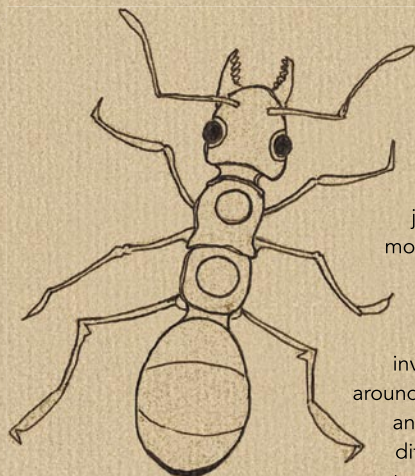
Bitebot Tastes the Chemistry of Flavour

Researchers at France's national school for agricultural and food industry engineering have built an artificial mouth – the first able to handle hard foods – to help them break down the chemistry of flavour. As we chew our food, volatile aromatics are released and float up to the nasal cavity, where they register as, say, lemon or jalapeño. To capture those odorants, the masticating bot simulates the conditions inside a human maw



– from the saliva to the grinding motion – and then whisks away the compounds for analysis. By varying the crush parameters (speed and time), the French team plans to pinpoint exactly how chewing affects the quality of a mouthful. The goal: lab-engineered flavours.

Katharine Gammon *Wired* Issue 16.11 October 20, 2008 http://www.wired.com/gadgets/miscellaneous/magazine/16-11/st_mechmouth



Ants Have a Simple Solution to Traffic Congestion

While our cars get clogged in jams, ants help each other to move around their colony much more efficiently. Researchers from the Dresden University of Technology in Germany investigated how ants move around their colony. They set up an ant highway with two routes of different widths from the nest to some sugar syrup. Not surprisingly, the narrower route

soon became congested. But when an ant returning along the congested route to the nest collided with another ant just starting out, the returning ant pushed the newcomer onto the other path. The team found that even though ants being rerouted sometimes took a longer route, they still got to the food quickly and efficiently.

If human drivers travelling in opposite directions could pass congestion information to each other in this way, we would all be better off.

NewScientist Issue 2681 November 6, 2008 <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20026815.400-ants-have-a-simple-solution-to-traffic-congestion.html>

Babies Jealous before They Can Crawl

A York University professor has uncovered evidence that infants as young as three months old exhibit signs of jealousy, contrary to theories that it takes root during the terrible twos. "The established notion was that an emotion like jealousy is too complex for the basic cognitive abilities of infants," Maria Legerstee said. "Jealousy implies the formation of a social bond, and is a reaction to the presence of one who threatens this bond. Thus at three months infants are *aware of other people*. This is strong evidence that infants understand that motives or goals guide our communicative behaviour."

York University October 20, 2008 <http://www.yorku.ca/mediar/archive/Release.asp?Release=1526>

Breakthrough Study Finds Protein That Can Detect Heart Disease

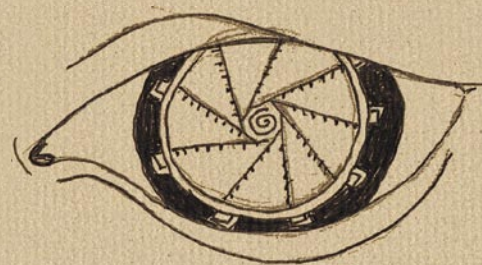
Measuring certain proteins through a simple blood test may make heart disease easier to detect and a lot less deadly, according to a study published online in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. People with healthy low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels but elevated levels of high-sensitivity C-reactive proteins experienced a nearly 50% reduction in the risk of heart attack, stroke and cardiovascular death with a daily dose of a cholesterol-lowering statin drug, the study found.

The reduction in heart disease risk among people who appear healthy and lack risk factors such as elevated cholesterol – which describes about half of those who experience heart disease – is such a significant finding that the drug trial was cut short in order to publish the results sooner.

Kate Hammer *Globe and Mail* November 10, 2008 <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20081110.HEART10/TPStory/Front>

Souped-Up Contact Lenses Promise On-Demand Bionic Eyesight

There's hope yet for superhuman vision, and without surgery: a team at the University of Washington has created a contact lens assembled with functional circuitry and light-emitting diodes. Potential uses include virtual displays for pilots, video game projections and telescopic vision for soldiers. A working prototype of a lens-embedded antenna that draws power for the device from radio frequencies has also been created. The next steps are to build a version that can display several pixels – and then to test it on a person.



Erik Sofge *Popular Mechanics* April 2008 http://www.popularmechanics.com/science/health_medicine/4252012.html