Tech News

Arthur C. Clarke died

Sir Arthur Clarke was one of the great science-fiction authors of my youth, with some of his best books published in the 1950s, although he continued to write good books throughout his career. He died at the age of 90 in Sri Lanka (where he had lived since 1956) on 19 March 2008.

He is probably best known as the author of *2001: a Space Odyssey*, but he is also responsible for several real-world ideas, such as geostationary communications satellites and space elevators.
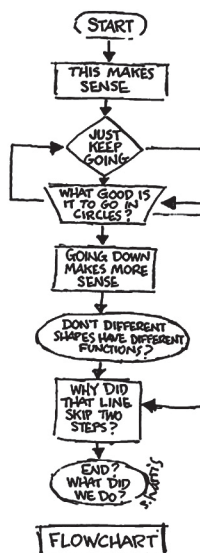
The following quotes (from Wikipedia article "Clarke's laws") are typical of his view of technology:

1. *When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong.*
2. *The only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible.*
3. *Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.*
4. *For every expert there is an equal and opposite expert.*

His third law is frequently quoted, and provides one of the main approaches to literary handling of future technology in most modern science fiction—the technology is never explained, just taken for granted by the users of it.

Flowchart

Sydney Harris

Flowcharts were a popular diagramming technique for computer programmers in the 1960s and early 1970s, but by the 1980s, they had been largely replaced by *pseudocode* that is easier to read and write and is much more compact. Flowcharts continue to be popular with businessmen, who like both the pictorial representation and the illusion of order that it creates. This cartoon parodies the businessman's flowchart.

Free Photoshop Express

Photoshop is a good way to create high-quality sprites for Scratch. You can put yourself, your pets, or anything you can take a picture of into your games!

In the past you have had to buy Photoshop (or the cheaper version, Photoshop Elements) to get the advantages of Photoshop. But it is now available in as a free service from Adobe. They are calling there service Adobe Photoshop Express, and providing 2 Gbytes of free photo storage. This service is a beta release, which means there may still be some bugs, and they may change things around in response to feedback from users. You can find it at http://www.photoshop.com/express/

I have Photoshop Elements on my computer already, so I don't expect to use the on-line service much.

Adobe is joining a fairly crowded market, as there are already services like Picnik and FotoFlexer available, but their name recognition will help. I believe that they are expecting to support the site through selling advertising.

I was going to write a short review of the service, but I was unable to get anything past the first web page to work for me—it would show the "Initializing" box and then freeze. Other people have managed to get the site to work, so it may have something to do with how old my computer's browser and operating system are. Try it out on your computers and let me know if it works for you!

Get your movies/games ready for Family Science Night

Family Science Night is coming up on Thursday April 24, only 3 weeks away. I'd like for the Tech Club to show off the games and movies made this year.

Please put together your best work and help me set up the Tech Club demo on April 24.