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Op Ed-Opinions and Editorials-Pelikan's Antidisambiguation-"Alexa, Read Me War and Peace"

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have you had occasion to converse with Alexa yet? In all of our continual, drawn-out arrival to “The Future,” the current crop of digital assistants come pretty close to achieving a hallmark of that future we have been seeing in science fiction for decades.

“Computer,” says Captain Kirk. It is very much like that. The capability is simply in the room and you address it directly. I am probably guilty of being a fan boy for Alexa. When the Amazon Echo was pre-released a few years back, I was among those who received an invitation to buy before general release. There was a price deal — half price — and the service’s capabilities were in their infancy.

It was a little creepy at first, and it took a little while to sort out the facts surrounding the technology. Yes, the Echo is listening for its trigger word all the time, but no, it is not streaming the entire dialog in the room to the cloud, only a sentence that immediately follows the trigger word.

What you get in return for that tap into the cloud is access to all the cloud-based capabilities that the device connects you to.

These capabilities are under continual revision. In part, this is in the interest of chasing down bugs or unintended consequences.

In January, a San Diego television station originated a news report about a six year old girl in Dallas who had said to the Echo, “Alexa, buy me a dollhouse.” When the Amazon Echo was nine years old, I was among those who received an invitation to buy before general release. There was a price deal — half price — and the service’s capabilities were in their infancy.

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