

In a cameras-everywhere culture, science fiction becomes reality

By Tracey Lien and Paresh Dave, Los Angeles Times

Science fiction writer David Brin calls it “a tsunami of lights” – a future where tiny cameras are everywhere, lighting up everything we do, and even predicting what we’ll do next.

Unlike George Orwell’s novel “1984,” where only Big Brother controlled the cameras, in 2015, cheap, mobile technology has turned everyone into a watcher.

A snowboarder with a GoPro can post a YouTube video of a friend’s 540-degree McTwist in the halfpipe. But also – as happened recently – a Penn State fraternity can upload Facebook photos of partially naked, sleeping college women.

A San Jose homeowner cowers behind a locked door while she watches an intruder stroll through her home on a surveillance video. A man launches a drone to spy on his neighbor tanning by her pool. Pet owners monitor their dogs.

That includes the police, whose actions can be recorded by anyone with a camera phone. In South Carolina, a cellphone video released last week showed a police officer firing eight shots at a fleeing man’s back. In San Bernardino County, news choppers captured footage of deputies punching and kicking a man as he lay face-down on the ground with his hands behind his back.

“Painting a picture that cameras are everywhere and anywhere is pretty provocative,” said Ryan Martin, a technology analyst at 451 Research, but it can also present opportunities to increase accountability and improve safety.

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