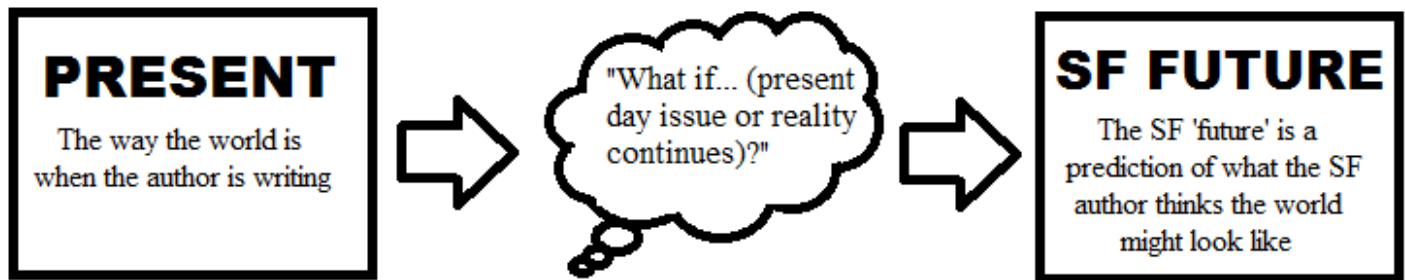


Extrapolation & Science Fictionality

Debra Benita Shaw in *Technoculture: The Key Concepts* states: [The term extrapolation] refers to estimates about the future based on known facts and observations but it has been adopted by SF academics to describe the thought process which SF writers employ in constructing future and alternative worlds. Science fiction is never really about the future but it makes use of the future to extrapolate from the cultural conditions of the author's time and place. It is a projection of what might be, given the current state of society and, perhaps more importantly, it takes for granted that social conditions are structured by, and a fundamental structuring element in, the development of new technologies. (Shaw, 2008, p. 1-2)

Basically, we can think of science fiction stories as **thought experiments**:



Being aware of how SF authors are inspired by their present helps us realize how useful science fiction texts can be in questioning the way things are in the present. For example, if a story shows us what the world will look like if we ignore climate change and that future is something we don't want to become a reality, we can use what we learn from those stories to drive action and make positive change in the present—we can avoid that future. Of course, SF stories aren't purely predictive. They are meant to be fun and interesting. But they also provide important commentary on issues currently impacting our world.

The concept of **science fictionality**, coined by SF scholar Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., pushes this idea one step further. This line of thinking suggests we shouldn't just be inspired by science fiction, but should think science fictionally—we should critically think about everything in terms of potential consequences, what kind of future it will lead to, and acknowledge how quickly the world is changing.

“The future is already here—it's just not evenly distributed.”
- William Gibson, SF writer and person who coined the term 'internet'