



Stanford eCorner

Distributed Computing Became an Appliance

Ken Wirt, *palmOne, Inc.*

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Wirt explains that computers have become so cheap and common that they can now be found in countless devices. He was able to count 14 computers in his kitchen alone. Optical drives are another example of a device that was once very expensive, but has now become a standard technology and its use and application has greatly expanded.



Transcript

You know what's happening in computing and of course originally you had the different engine and obviously some kind of giant computer thing and now we've got little computers, what happened there and as you look around, I've got 14 different computers in my kitchen alone which is not sort of the most automated part of my house that run different things. Lots of appliances have specialized kind of computers in them, you've got clocks, you've got things that measure temperature -- a big central processing unit and people use to go there and process things when I was a student here at Stanford. Sure enough we use to take punch cards into the engineering center and submit that and there weren't computers all over the place. Same kind of thing it's not just the computer but the things that go along with it, so optical drives. When I was at NEC, this is not that long it was like 1988, we first came out with optical drives and it costs \$1200 and they were very expensive and people said, "Oh my boy, in a one CD could hold the equivalent of whatever it was at that time." A 150 floppy disks which seemed like you would stack them up and it was kind of a mountain like that. In my house now I counted up, I have 16 optical drives in my house. That's not because I have got a ton of computers. I mean each person has one computer at my house but you know every computers' got one or two optical drives, and game machines of optical drives and then you've got the CD audio player and the DVD players and the kids have game machines and the cars' have CD players and you add it up and you take this thing that was once you say, "How can I possibly ever need or use more than one of these and they're expensive and now they're everywhere. I mean you can take from this that it seems pretty easy to predict; take the one thing that's expensive and now it's going to go everywhere but again you could kind of be wrong and you think something is a lot of fun like driving this truck that says barrels of fun and you might not have so much fun or you might make a wrong turn and wind up not exactly where you have planned.