

SEARCH

The Web

CNN.com

Search

Powered by YAHOO! search

Home Page
World
U.S.
Weather
Business
Sports
Politics
Law
Technology
Science & Space
Health
Entertainment
Travel
Education
Special Reports

SERVICES
Video
E-mail Newsletters
Your E-mail Alerts
RSS
CNNtoGO
TV Commercials
Contact Us
SEARCH
Web CNN.com
<input type="text"/>
Search
Powered by YAHOO! search

TECHNOLOGY

CNN **HeadlineNews** **buzz FACTOR** HEADLINE NEWS

There once was a woman who lived in her computer

By Christine Boese
 CNN Headline News
 Monday, June 21, 2004 Posted: 12:34 PM EDT (1634 GMT)

(CNN) -- I've been abuzz lately with a fantasy of a "smart home." My mom and I share a hobby of obsessively drawing house floor plans, but mine are always a little goofy because I try to cram every gizmo I can think of into them. At the very least, I have visions of server closets dancing in my head: the whole house networked and wireless. I can dream, can't I?

But when I jump online to research what are starting to be marketed as "smart homes," I get irritated. They don't match my daydreams at all. Instead, with Internet refrigerators and toasters, all-seeing sensors monitoring my every burp and gurgle, I think I'd feel more like a prisoner in my own castle. I have paranoid fits just thinking about it.

Which is why I don't want to waltz into my first smart home without thinking about how the technology will shape me more than I may be empowered by it.

Basically, I want to shift my frame of reference from thinking of technology as objects I manipulate to thinking about technology as an immersive environment.

Or, to put it more simply, instead of thinking of a computer as a beige box of fans, chips, drives and a motherboard, I want to start thinking of my home as a large, walk-in computer.

I'm reminded of how early automobiles were given the limited nickname "horseless carriages," as if that were all a car culture could or would become. Social structures will always shape and twist technology into uses few can foresee.

In a [past column](#), I wrote of Marshall McLuhan's concept of technologies as extensions of our physical selves outside

Internet Refrigerator



Woman uses Japanese "Internet Refrigerator" with panel for household appliances and environmental control.

advertiser links [what's this?](#)

ITT Tech Institute - Free Brochure
 ITT Tech - Technology and business focused degree programs for today's...
www2.itt-tech.edu

Technology
 University of Phoenix offers diverse course work with online classes and well...
www.universityofphoenix.com

Subscribe - Forbes/Wolfe Nanotech Report
 Intelligent nanotechnology research based on a sound understanding of science...
www.forbesnanotech.com

Technology How to
 Earn your technology degree from Devry University. Boost your earning power with...
www.directdegree.com

RELATED

[E-mail Buzz Factor](#)

Search Jobs MORE OPTIONS

Enter Keywords

Enter City ALI

careerbuilder.com SEARCH

our bodies: the car an extension of the foot; a book an extension of the eye, etc. As long as we think of technology in terms of gadgets outside ourselves, I believe we will continue to become more fragmented and extended. We are dependent on our calculators just as the classical Greek orators lost their memorization skills with the advent of writing technologies and literacies

But McLuhan wrote of how we "interiorize" technology as well. He looked at how a technological culture "writes" and shapes our inner worlds. The thoughts we think in an Internet chat room are vastly different than the topics that come up by candlelight or around a campfire.

Once distributed among many people, lowly personal computers became much more than the sum of their scaled-down parts. With many contributors, the technological environment expanded rapidly. Some computerized objects stayed very small, such as digital cameras or music players. Meanwhile, networked systems began to grow that beige box of the PC to the size of a house some of us would actually consider living in, just like the old woman who lived in a shoe.

How will this immersive environment shape the interiors of our minds? Will we master and direct the technology to our needs? I also have a nightmare where my maxed-out smart home does nothing but blink 12:00 over and over.

YOUR E-MAIL ALERTS

HLN Buzz Factor

Marshall McLuhan

Internet

Technology

Activate or **CREATE YOUR OWN**

[Manage alerts](#) | [What is this?](#)

advertisement

Story Tools

[SAVE THIS](#) [E-MAIL THIS](#)

[PRINT THIS](#) [MOST POPULAR](#)

[Click Here to try 4 Free Trial Issues of Time!](#)



TECHNOLOGY

[TECHNOLOGY NEWS](#)

TOP STORIES

[CNN.com HOME PAGE](#)

[Blog-linked firings prompt calls for better policies](#)



[Journalist: 'Americans fired without motive'](#)



- [Small cars fare poorly in crash tests](#)
- [High-tech hunters push ethical envelope](#)
- [CNN/Money: Stripper puts silicone implant on eBay](#)

- [Lebanese, Syrians to discuss pullback](#)
- [Lawyers: BTK suspect says he's depressed](#)
- [Social Security battle heats up](#)

[International Edition](#)

[Languages](#)

[CNN TV](#)

[CNN International](#)

[Headline News](#)

[Transcripts](#)

[Advertise With Us](#)

[About Us](#)

SEARCH

[The Web](#)

[CNN.com](#)

Search

Powered by **YAHOO!** search

© 2005 Cable News Network LP, LLLP.

A Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

[Terms](#) under which this service is provided to you.

Read our [privacy guidelines](#). [Contact us](#).



All external sites will open in a new browser. CNN.com does not endorse external sites.



Denotes premium content.



Add [RSS headlines](#).