

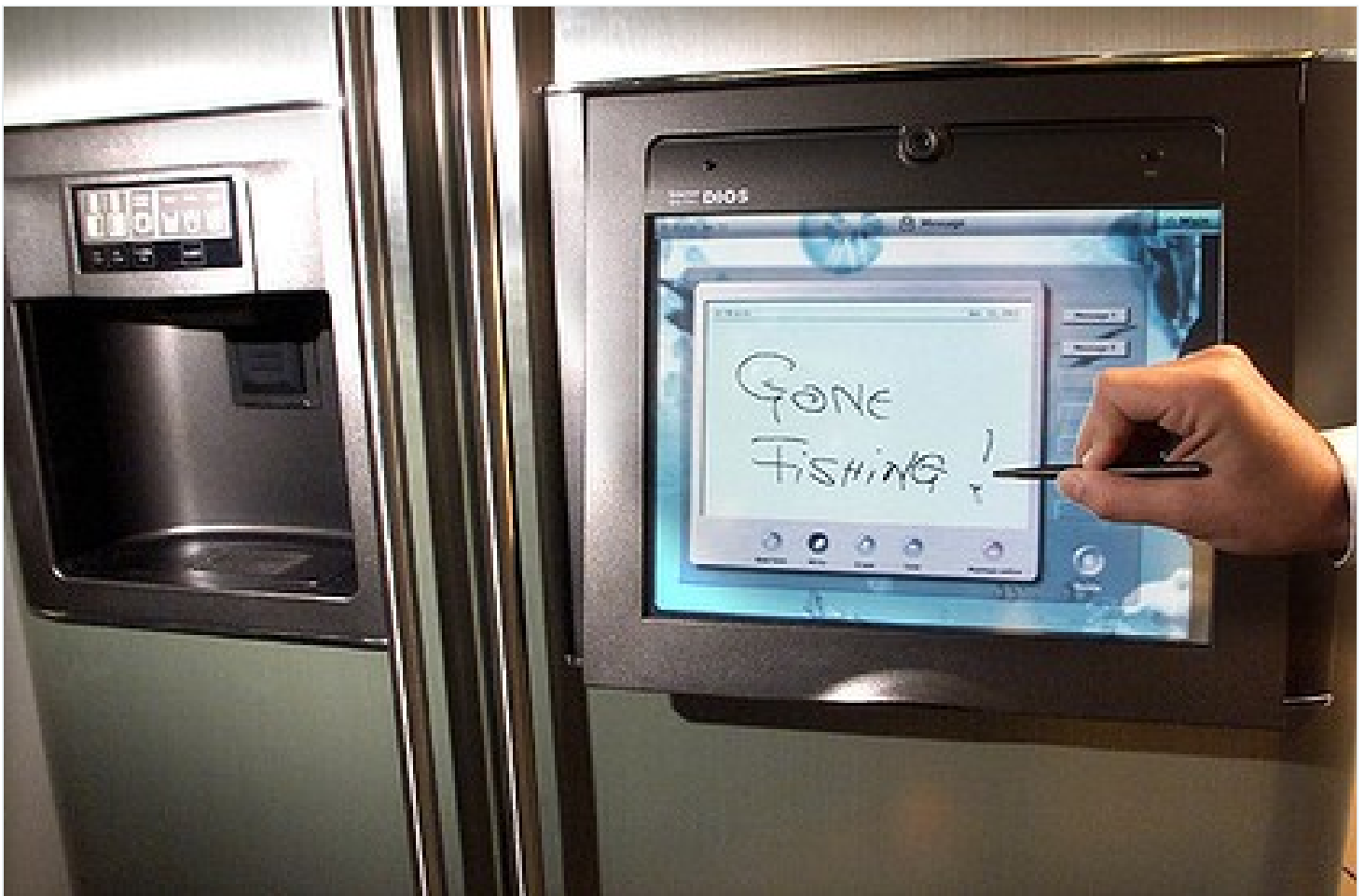
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## FOURTEEN

Every decade or so, the tech industry gets a hairball in its throat and decides to cough up a hairball in the form of a really bad idea that failed the first or second time around, and tries to hype it into success one more time.

**Dave McClure** • Feb. 17, 2016



Every decade or so, the tech industry gets a hairball in its throat and decides to cough up a hairball in the form of a really bad idea that failed the first or second time around, and tries to hype it into success one more time.

Or as philosopher George Santayana put it, “Those who cannot remember the past

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- Samsung and others are creating a new generation of “smart” appliances like refrigerators that can monitor temperatures, maintain shopping lists and more.
- Apple, paying no heed whatsoever to the several iterations of “data watches” that failed in the Eighties, gambled on the success of the iWatch, which is also failing to capture the attention of more than a small herd of geeks.
- Remember the Home of the Future, as envisioned in 1957? There’s a nice summary of home automation features that never caught on at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VowfYuhx1-o>.
- The AutoGyro and other automobile/airplane hybrids also failed, but development is re-emerging in projects such as the Terrafugia TF-X.

I don’t begrudge the companies that want to pursue this IoT vision, so long as they use their money and not my tax dollars to fund it. I do suggest that before we do anything rash, though, such as dedicating the major theme of the Consumer Electronics Show to hawking these devices, that we take a minute to look backward. (Note: Too late in the case of CES, which had the Internet of Things as a major theme.)

There are three lessons from the past and three from the present that argue against this ever becoming more than a wistful dream:

- Past endeavors in this area failed because they were too complicated for the average consumer. Truth is, synchronizing my data watch with my Windows PC was slow if not downright painful.
- Devices in the past, including the Internet Refrigerator, simply cost too much. Who wants to pay thousands of dollars to know when the milk has gone bad? Just open the carton and take a whiff...
- How on earth can thousands of devices, with minimal standardization in protocols, hope to interact with each other? How many IP addresses will we need,

and where will we get them (perhaps IPV 2028)?

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even more so. But with the economy sliding toward a possible recession and talk of yet a third “tech bubble” in our lifetimes, there may be more productive and efficient ways to invest in the tech of the future.

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