

DEATH OF THE FLOPPY DISK

It seems the days of the floppy disc could be numbered. Back in their 1990's heyday, the iconic 'floppy' sold in the billions, but plummeting demand has driven high-street computer retailer PC World to drop the discs from sale once their current stocks run out. Computers with floppy drives will also be phased out by the store later this year.



Forever associated with the early days of personal computing, the original floppy disc was actually an 8 inch plastic disc introduced by IBM in 1971 – the much-loved 3.5 inch format first appeared in 1981 under the Sony brand.

The floppy disc, with its meagre 1.44 megabytes of space, have been vastly superseded by devices like USB sticks, memory cards, and rewritable CDs. The need for ever-increasing storage space for digital files (photos for example) has made the floppy largely redundant.

DSG International, the parent company of PC World, previously made headline news by discontinuing video recorders and analogue cameras from its stores. Brian Magrath, commercial director of PC World, is quoted as saying: “It is now increasingly standard for computer users to transfer data via the internet or use USB memory sticks, some of which will store the equivalent of 1,000 times the capacity of floppy disk. With that amount of memory available in such a small and convenient device, the floppy disk looks increasingly quaint and simply isn't able to compete.”

Today, only 2% of the computers sold by the store are fitted with floppy drives – this is expected to become 0% by the summer. To quote Mr Magrath: “The sound of a computer's floppy disk drive will be as closely associated with 20th Century computing as the sound of a computer dialling in to the internet.”