

why

To help you understand about a technology that will affect all our lives in the very near future

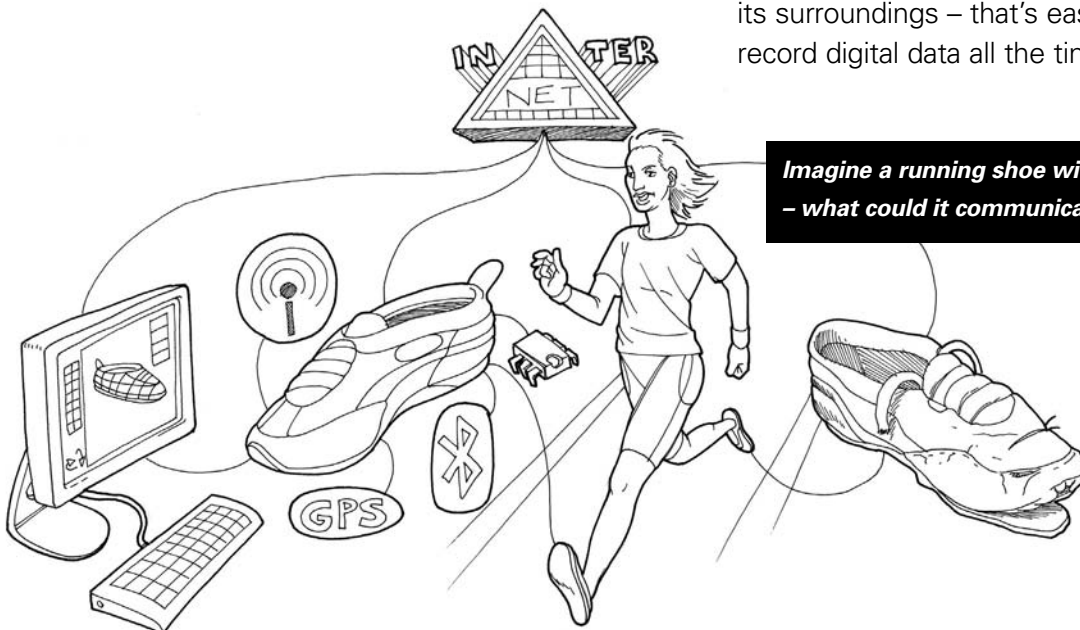
read about this

The science-fiction author and futurist Bruce Sterling coined the word **SPIME** for any object that could be tracked precisely in space and time. SPIME is a contraction of SP(ACE & T)IME to give SPIME.

A SPIME is a unique object that knows where it is at any particular time and what the environment is like where it is. It may be able to record its position and the nature of its surroundings. It can transmit this data, along with its identity, to a wide range of receivers. It can locate and read data from a wide range of sources. Confused? Don't worry, just keep reading!

- A SPIME is a combination of technologies that we already have.
- It is tagged so that its position in time and space is known – already any object can be given a radio frequency identity, often called an RFID tag.
- It knows where it is – one way we already have of doing this is GPS (Geographical Positioning System) and some mobile phones have GPS.
- It knows what its environment is like – this is by using sensors to read light levels, carbon dioxide levels, or whatever, and we have had the technology to do this for a long time already.

- It can record its position and the nature of its surroundings – that's easy, computers record digital data all the time.



- It can transmit data to a wide range of receivers. Computers connected to the Internet do this all the time. And, with WiFi, the connection is wireless.
- It can locate and read data from a wide range of sources – that's what search engines like Google do, so a SPIME only needs to be able to connect to the Internet and then it can use the search engines there.

OK, so a SPIME is a seriously clever little thing, so what? Imagine a SPIME in a public transport vehicle.



- The SPIME would know where the vehicle was at any one time.
- The SPIME would know the current weather and other environmental conditions.
- The SPIME would be able to find out about traffic conditions.
- The SPIME would be able to transmit all this information to the traffic-control system.
- The traffic-control system could receive information from people who wanted to use public transport – where they were and where they wanted to go.
- The traffic-control system, knowing where all public-transport vehicles were, could work out the best vehicle and route to pick up these people and deliver them to their destination.
- The traffic-control system could relay this information to the public transport vehicle. The vehicle would almost certainly be able to control itself without human intervention.

discuss
and note

○ What would be the advantages and disadvantages of putting SPIMES in the following?

- children's clothes
- prison uniforms
- under people's skin
- in livestock intended for human consumption
- in private cars
- in goods in warehouses before they are sold
- in goods as they are being manufactured
- in washing machines, fridges, cookers.

write
about this

○ Draw up a table to summarise the findings of your discussion.

○ Decide whether you think SPIMES are a good or bad thing.

look
at this

○ You can find out more about Bruce Sterling by visiting this website:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Sterling