

History of Gadgetry



FACING: The Osaka University vacuum tube electronic calculator • LEFT: The TYK wireless telephone, a world-first • CENTER: Sharp Corporation's Compet electronic desk calculator • RIGHT: Victor Company's VHS home video player

In October of this year, the National Museum of Nature and Science launched a new system for registering historically significant items in the science and technology field. The system will ensure that devices of historical importance and gadgets with a major impact on society, culture or everyday life are preserved for future generations. Following a survey encompassing all of Japan's past science and technology efforts, the first round of registrations selected 23 items to be preserved for posterity. Here are a few examples.

The TYK wireless telephone, now in the Communications Museum collection in Tokyo, was a world-first. After Marconi invented the wireless telegraph, there was fierce international competition to develop a wireless telephone, and Japanese inventors succeeded in doing so around 1913. An eagerly-awaited invention in its day, this device has a well-deserved place in history. The Osaka University vacuum tube electronic calculator, held by the Museum of Osaka University, was developed at the

dawn of Japanese computing. Building this device in the 1950s put the university at the forefront of computer development in Japan and the world.

Launched in 1964, Sharp Corporation's Compet electronic desk calculator was the world's first all-transistor-diode calculating machine. This product was the precursor of light, compact calculators for the masses. The HR-3300 VHS home video launched by Victor Company of Japan in 1976 was the first-ever VHS-format video device. VHS subsequently became the global standard, and total production in 2006 exceeded 900 million units. This invention sparked the popularization of home video, changing the lives of people the world over.

Looking back at these items, now preserved as part of our technological heritage, is bound to prompt a sense of nostalgia. These milestones on the road to scientific progress will help to pave a path to the technologies of the future.

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