

Herald Sun

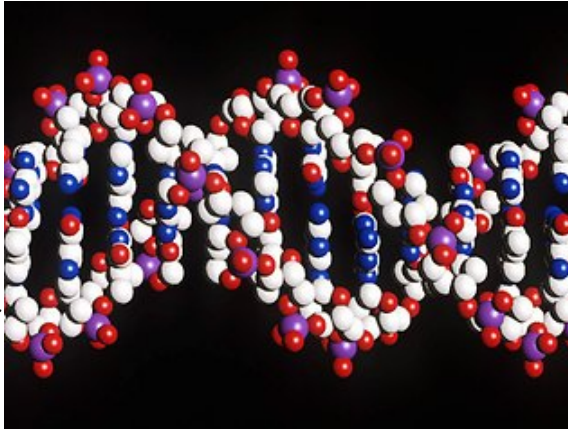
Technology

Sci-Tech

Store your happy snaps in your DNA?

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WITHIN a few decades, you could be storing your data on the very same stuff that you're made of.



Researchers have developed a new method for encoding several common computer file formats via DNA, Mashable reported.

Scientists have used DNA to store an mp3, a jpeg photo, a pdf file - and every one of William Shakespeare's sonnets. Picture: AFP
Source: AFP

Apparently, DNA has a storage density of about 2.2 petabytes (one petabyte is equal to 1048576 gigabytes) per gram - several thousand times more than currently available storage media.

And it remains stable for much, much longer. The project's leader, Nick Goldman, says that fragments of DNA have been found that are tens of thousands of years old, and that it lasts even longer if it's frozen.

The researchers from the European Biometrics Institute in the UK managed to encode DNA with an audio file of Martin Luther King's most famous speech, "I Have A Dream", a scientific PDF, one of Shakespeare's sonnets, and a colour photograph.

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They're also not the first to demonstrate DNA data storage. Last year a team of researchers led by Harvard University genetics professor George Church encoded an entire book in DNA.

Church is now working on a system for encoding analog signals, like video and audio, directly into DNA, bypassing the need for electronic systems altogether.

So far, however, it's all proving rather pricey. Goldman's team estimate that it currently costs US\$12,400 (\$11754) to encode just a single megabyte of information, and another US\$220 (\$208) to read that megabyte back.

But they also believe that the price of DNA synthesis will come down in the next few decades, even to the extent that it will be cheaper than archiving on magnetic tapes.

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