Ethernet Marks 40 Years Linking People, Computers in a Wired World

 Posted 2013-05-23

The Ethernet Innovation Summit, held May 22 and 23 at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, Calif., celebrated the 40th anniversary of the most ubiquitous networking system. It has been conservatively estimated that about 90 percent of all the world's devices are connected with Ethernet. That includes smartphones, PCs, servers, routers, switches, remote and embedded devices—anything and everything that can connect to others inside a network. Co-inventors Bob Metcalfe, who later founded 3Com, and David Boggs were among the networking pioneers attending the two-day series of presentations, panel discussions, networking events and cocktail hours. All that Metcalfe, Boggs and their colleagues wanted to do at first was simply connect computers to printers, so they could print paper documents. Obviously, the $200 billion global networking industry has advanced a bit further than that during the past four decades. The following slide show focuses on highlights of the Ethernet Innovation Summit plus photos of some of the world's first Internet networking equipment.

(Photos by Chris Preimesberger, eWEEK).

Ethernet Celebrates a Big Milestone

On May 22, 1973, Bob Metcalfe of the Palo Alto Research Center (now Xerox PARC) wrote a memo he circulated that was entitled "Alto Ethernet." The memo contained a rough schematic of how it would work. Ethernet now runs on about 90 percent of all the world's connected devices. The event, held May 22 and 23 at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, drew a capacity audience

The Saffo and Metcalfe Show

Event emcee and Stanford University professor/author/futurist Paul Saffo (right) jokes with Bob Metcalfe, co-inventor of Ethernet, at the Ethernet Innovation Summit at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View. Metcalfe founded 3Com, and as of January 2006, he is a general partner of Polaris Venture Partners. He is also a professor of electrical engineering and director of innovation at the University of Texas at Austin.

Ethernet Co-Inventors Bob Metcalfe and Dave Boggs

As a student in his 20s at MIT, Metcalfe connected computers to Arpanet, the government/military predecessor to the Internet. Later, he teamed up with radio expert David Boggs (right) to implement Ethernet, and later to collaborate on internetworking. Both Metcalfe and Boggs were on hand May 22 and 23 for the Ethernet Innovation Summit in Mountain View.