Journey to the cloud

A visual history of data

From handwritten files to multi-device access in the cloud, how we share, collaborate, and manage our data has changed drastically through the years.

1898

Four-drawer file cabinet[1]

Data capacity
~26 in. of files per drawer, or 13,000 pages of letter-size paper

Physical space
52 x 26.5 in.

Pre 1940s

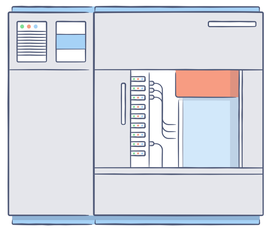
Punch card

Data capacity
70 bytes[2] (each with 80 characters[3])

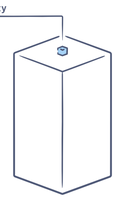
Physical space
7.375 x 3.25 x .007 in.[4]

1956

Hard drive[6]



Data capacity
5 MB



Physical space
IBM's RAMAC 305 was as big as two refrigerators and used 50 24-in. platters.

1970s

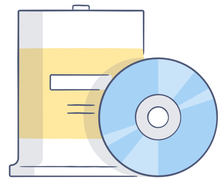
Floppy disk

Data capacity
80 KB[7]

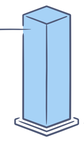
Physical space
100 5.25-in. floppy disks = 1 GB, 6-in. tall[8]

1985

CD-ROM[9]



Data capacity
700 MB



Physical space
80–120 mm (not including case)

1995

Zip drive[10]

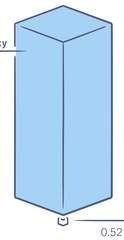
Data capacity
100 MB

Physical space
Slightly bigger than a 3.5-in. floppy

2000s

USB drive[11]

Data capacity
128 GB



Physical space
0.52 x 1.67 x 0.26 in.

SDSC card[12]

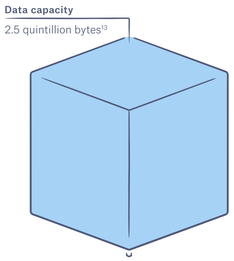
Data capacity
1 MB

Physical space
32 x 24 x 2.1 mm

Late 2000s–Now

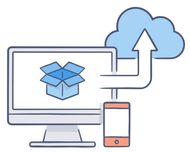
The cloud

Data capacity
2.5 quintillion bytes[13]



Physical space
Millions of data centers worldwide, with up to 102 TB per second of bandwidth[14]

Dropbox



2007: Cloud-based storage service Dropbox launches, offering 2 GB of storage per user.

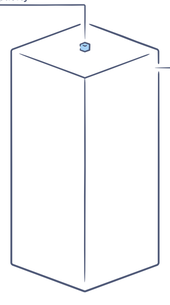
2013: Dropbox Business is born, giving users the ability to simultaneously access personal and work accounts from any device.

2015: Beta version of Dropbox Paper (cloud-based document editing) is launched.

1951

1 reel of magnetic tape[5]

Data capacity
3 MB



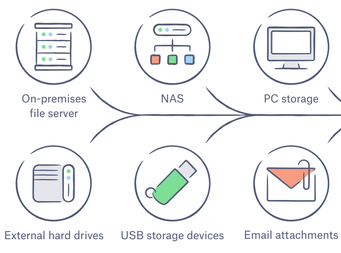
Physical space
1,200-ft. reel made up of 1.5-in.-wide metal tape with an area of 21,600 sq. in.

Streamline access on the cloud

The evolution of file storage systems has led to a complex combination of cloud and legacy system usage, meaning the user spends more time managing files than necessary.

Gain efficiency when you switch from legacy systems to the cloud. In addition to being a burden to manage, legacy and hybrid file storage approaches could put your information at risk.

Legacy/Hybrid



Cloud

Dropbox streamlines user access in a scalable, secure, and easy-to-manage way.

over **500 million** worldwide users

over **200,000** paying businesses on Dropbox Business

1890 — **2020**

Data is projected to at least double every two years, with human- and machine-generated data growing 10x faster than business data.[15] Don't let a "wait and see" mentality hold your organization back from replacing legacy data storage with cloud and hybrid solutions.

For more information, check out our eBook: go.dropbox.com/en-us/infrastructure-modernization

Sources:

1 4-Drawer Letter Size Vertical File Cabinet, Staples
2 "The History of Computer Storage," 2011, ExtremeTech
3 "If Data Was Stored on Punch Cards, How Much Space Would Google Need?" 2013, Gizmodo
4 "History of the Punch Card," TechTarget
5 "UNIVAC Metal Tape Reel," 2017, Computer History Museum
6 "The Hard Drive Turns 50," 2006, PCWorld
7 "IBM Minnow Floppy Disk Drive," 2017, Computer History Museum
8 "How Many Floppy Disks Would It Take To Equal 1 Gigabyte?" 2013, TechRepublic
9 "Understanding CD-R and CD-RW," 2001, Optical Storage Technology Association
10 "Think Retro," 2015, MacWorld
11 SanDisk Ultra Flash Drive, Amazon
12 "How to Buy an SD Card," 2014, How-To Geek
13 "What Is Big Data?" IBM
14 "The Exponential Growth of Data," 2017, Inside Big Data
15 "An All-Too-Brief History of File Sharing," 2016, Smartfile

Dropbox