

we could do with vast numbers of fairly standardised units. In our Borg system, we had even abstracted away the concept of the physical machine to virtual ones which we created and discarded with abandon.

This change of relationship was not unfamiliar to me as I ran an online photo service and could clearly see the same impacts happening with images. As the industry evolved from photo film to digital images then the behaviour of the user was slowly altering in front of us. In the past, every single photo taken was precious and it required some effort including a trip to a photo processing lab. Accidentally taking a shot with the camera lens cap on was met with sighs of disappointment due to the waste of film, the effort of trying to set up that good shot and the inevitable wasted print from the lab. However, the format had become a more digital commodity and so users increasingly took many shots and discarded unwanted ones regularly. The idea of taking and throwing away images with abandon was no longer waste but an expected consequence of taking thousands of them. Ditto virtual machines.

The use of computing infrastructure was also not seen as a differential between companies but instead more of a cost of doing business. Whilst in the very early days, you might have had a press announcement with a CEO that this or that company had bought their first computer, those days were long gone. Even the days where our system admins would take care in picking names for our servers, such as famous Sci-Fi characters or places was disappearing. These servers were no longer pets, they were becoming cattle.