

Since Jevons' original observation about coal-fired steam engines is a bit hard to relate to, my favourite modernized example for people who aren't software nerds is display technology.

Old CRT screens were *horribly* inefficient - they were large, clunky and absolutely guzzled power. Modern LCDs and OLEDs are slim, flat and use much less power, so that seems great ... except we're now using powered screens in a lot of contexts that would be unthinkable in the CRT era.

If I visit the local fast food joint, there's a row of large LCD monitors, most of which simply display static price lists and pictures of food. 20 years ago, those would have been paper posters or cardboard signage. The large ads in the urban scenery now are huge RGB LED displays (with whirring cooling fans); just 5 years ago they were large posters behind plexiglass. Bus stops have very large LCDs that display a route map and timetable which only changes twice a year - just two years ago, they were paper.

Our displays are much more power-efficient than they've ever been, but at the same time we're using *much* more power on displays than ever.

— [datarama](#), lobste.rs coment for "LLMs are cheap"

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