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New DNA Computer Functions sans Fuel
 Posted on Tuesday, February 25 @ 20:56:13 EST by [david](#) Contributed by: [david](#)

[excerpt] In 2001, scientists at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel announced that they had manufactured a computer so small that a single drop of water would hold a trillion of the machines. The devices used DNA and enzymes as their software and hardware and could collectively perform a billion transitions each second. Now the same team, led by Ehud Shapiro, has announced a novel model of its biomolecular machine that no longer requires an external energy source and performs 50 times faster than its predecessor did. The Guinness Book of World Records has crowned it the world's smallest biological computing device.

Many designs for minuscule computers aimed at harnessing the massive storage capacity of DNA have been proposed over the years. Earlier schemes have relied on a molecule known as ATP, which is a common source of energy for cellular reactions, as a fuel source. But in the new set up, a DNA molecule provides both the initial data and sufficient energy to complete the computation. Shapiro and his colleagues describe their DNA computer in a report published online this week by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

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