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How the Internet took over

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A QUARTER-CENTURY OF CHANGES

The Nation's Newspaper turns 25 on Sept. 15, 2007. To help celebrate, we'll revisit those years with 25 lists over the next 25 weeks. If your choices differ, let us know in the comments section below.

Twenty-five years ago the Internet as we now know it was in the process of being birthed by the National Science Foundation. Since then it's been an information explosion. From e-mail to eBay, communication and shopping have forever changed.

1 World Wide Web

Tim Berners-Lee created user-friendly "Web pages" that could travel over the Internet, a network built to shuttle research between universities. The world logged on: 747 million adults in January.



By Barrett Lyon, Opte.org

2 E-mail

Tech's answer to the Pony Express. Programs such as 1988's Eudora made it easy to use. In-boxes have been filling up ever since. Nearly 97 billion e-mails are sent each day.

3 Graphical user interface (GUI)

Most computer displays were blinking lines of text until Apple featured clickable icons and other graphic tools in its 1984 Mac. Microsoft's Windows took GUI — pronounced "goeey" — to the masses.

4 AOL

AOL turned people on to Web portals, chat rooms and instant messaging. Early subscribers paid by the hour. AOL once boasted 35 million subscribers. It bought Time Warner for \$106 billion in 2001.



By Mark Lennihan, AP

5 Broadband

The answer to the drip-drip-drip of dial-up, high-speed Internet service fuels online entertainment. About 78% of home Internet users in the U.S. have

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broadband, up from less than 1% in 1998.

6 Google

So popular it's a verb. The search powerhouse, with a market capitalization of nearly \$149 billion, perfected how we find info on the Web. Google sites had nearly 500 million visitors in December.

7 Mosaic/Netscape

Created by Marc Andreessen and others, Mosaic was the first widely-used multimedia Web browser. Spin-off Netscape Navigator ruled the '90s until Microsoft's Internet Explorer took off around '98.

8 eBay

Thanks to eBay, we can all now buy and sell almost anything (skip the body parts). eBay has 230 million customers worldwide who engage in 100 million auctions at any given time.

9 Amazon.com

Jeff Bezos' baby began as an always-in-stock book seller. It survived the tech bubble and now is the definitive big box online store. It was the second most-visited online retailer in December, after eBay.



Screenshot

10 Wi-fi

Have coffee shop, will compute: Wireless fidelity lets us lug our laptops out of the office and connect to the Net on the fly. More than 200 million Wi-Fi equipped products sold last year.

11 Instant Messaging

LOL! Web surfers began to "laugh out loud" and BRB ("be right back") in the mid-'90s, with the launch of ICQ and AOL Instant Messenger. Millions use it to swap messages and photos, even telephone pals.

12 Yahoo!

Stanford University graduate students Jerry Yang and David Filo created this popular Web portal in 1994. It remains a favorite for email, photo sharing (it owns Flickr) and other services.



By John Makely, AP

13 CompuServe/Prodigy

In the 1980s, they became the first mainstream companies to offer consumer Internet access. CompuServe was more for the geek set; Prodigy was more for the masses.



Screenshot

14 The Well

The precursor for social networking, the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link, founded in 1985, was the original (now longest-running) virtual community. It gained popularity for its forums.

15 Vices

Regulators scrapped plans for a .xxx domain, but vice remains one of the Net's biggest businesses. Online gambling, illegal in the U.S., topped \$12 billion last year; online porn was \$2.84 billion. Searches for "Paris Hilton video" return about a million hits.

16 Spam/Spyware

Unsolicited e-mail, and software that



E-mail features

What's this?

E-mail newsletters

Sign up to receive our free Tech e-newsletter and get the top news of the day in your inbox.

E-mail



Select one: HTML Text

Breaking news E-mail alerts

Get breaking news in your inbox as it happens

watches your Web habits, mushroomed from annoyance to menace. Junk e-mail now accounts for more than 9 of every 10 messages sent over the Internet.

17 Flash

Adobe's Flash player is on 98% of all computers. Seen a video on YouTube or MySpace? Then you've probably used Flash. It animated the Web, spawning zillions of online cartoons and videos.

18 Online mapping tools

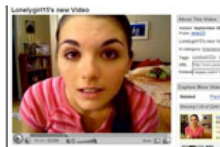
MapQuest started saving marriages in 1996 by offering turn-by-turn directions. Followers such as Yahoo and Google beam directions to cellphones and offer satellite images of neighborhoods.

19 Napster

Created in Shawn Fanning's dorm room, Napster let more than 26 million people tap into a free database of music. Record companies shut it down. In its wake emerged legitimate download sites, such as Apple's iTunes.

20 YouTube

The video-sharing site, bought by Google in 2006 for \$1.65 billion, ignited a user-generated revolution online and introduced millions to the delights of Stephen Colbert, Chad Vader and Lonelygirl15.



Handout

21 The Drudge Report

Matt Drudge's news site helped break the Monica Lewinsky story in 1998, paving the way for politically-minded bloggers everywhere. He claims to have about 500 million visitors a month.

22 Bloggers

The more than 75 million Web logs have changed how the world gets its news. Bloggers have challenged the traditional media, lobbied for and against wars, started debates, and posted far too many pictures of their pets.

23 Craigslist

Craig Newmark's gathering place for (mostly) free classified ads changed the way we find apartments, cars and dates. The site relies on users who supply friendly neighborhood information — about 14 million ads a month.

24 MySpace

This online hangout has replaced the mall as a home away from home for teenagers. The site has more than 173 million personalized pages. News Corp paid \$580 million for it in 2005.

25 Gaming and virtual worlds

More than 19 million globally pay to explore three-dimensional Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO) games such as *World of Warcraft* and virtual communities such as Second Life, which let players do business or just hang out. Both use the easy connections fostered by the Web to build communities.



Handout

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Comments: (31)



fadguru wrote: 1h 31m ago

I can't believe the authors of this list missed THE most significant factor that changed everything about the Internet.

WINDOWS 95. . .THE WATERSHED INTERNET RELATED EVENT TO DATE.

End of Conversation.

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Toledogrrl wrote: 1h 40m ago

I remember back in the 90's dialing up to my local BBS, here in ohio it was Eagles Nest and Omni-Link, and we paid by the minute. or if you sweet talked the Sysop then you could get some free credits outta them. I met many of my current friends to this day over that BBS system, as well as some quite interesting boyfriends. I miss the days of BBS'ing', things were simpler then. [and a ton more fun]

*Toledogrrl gives you a hug!

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Rosieiswatching wrote: 2h 8m ago

49 66 20 69 74 20 77 61 73 6e 27 74 20 66 6f 72 20 4c 6f 6e 65 6c 79 67 69 72 6c 31 35 2e 63 6f 6d 20 49 20 77 6f 75 6c 64 6e 27 74 20 68 61 76 65 20 6b 6e 6f 77 20 68 6f 77 20 74 6f 20 63 6f 64 65 20 73 74 75 66 66 20 6c 69 6b 65 20 74 68 69 73 2e 2e 2e 20 49 20 61 6d 20 68 6f 6f 6b 65 64 20 6e 6f 77 21 21 21 21

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Johnrap wrote: 23h 20m ago

Why do you reach into obscurity to grab the name of Tim Bernes Lee. But then you just gloss over the Gem Desktop to give Apple credit for GUI. You rewrite history by claiming that the internet was "birthed" in academia, as opposed to the defense department. But I suppose for people who refer to babies as fetuses that's a justifiable statement.

I don't know. I mean, nice try, the article was a good read. But it also looks like about the one billionth pathetic attempt for giving out credit for who brought what to the internet.

Honestly, all a piece like this does is make me skeptical about the history books from 500 and 1,000 years ago. I bet there were a lot of genius people who are forgotten because other worked real hard to steal the credit.

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Cameron01 wrote: 23h 43m ago

Did anyone play Ultima Online for the last half of the 90's? I remember playing Mechwarrior 2 over a program called Kali. anyone else?

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Andrea Stoneo wrote: 1d 9h ago

what about: 09 F9 11 02 9D 74 E3 5B D8 41 56 C5 63 56 88 C0

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Nancy Pantz wrote: 1d 12h ago

Re:Drudge's claim to have 500 million hits per month. I have a Buick that I claim gets 2,000,000,000,000 miles per gallon. Let me know if you want to do a story, you have to buy lunch.

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Nancy Pantz wrote: 1d 12h ago

I was on Prodigy in the 80's and it wasn't connected to the internet,.. it was a fancy bbs. Arpanet is the true root of the internet, not prodigy or aol. If you don't know the difference between the hardware layer and the software layer, you're probably unqualified to comment on whether Al Gore invented the internet. You just posted to the internet, you just

created a (tiny) part of the internet. Think about it, it's a network thats hetereogenous, redundant and ubiquitous and consists of hardware (like a phone) and software (like a conversation on the phone) both are useless without each other. But yeah, I'm with you on Usenet and "me sorry Kate Monster, but the Internet is for porn".

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RobbOrBaron wrote: 1d 15h ago
what? no al gore?

Recommend 6 | Report Abuse



dianealter wrote: 1d 23h ago
The introduction of on-line trading truley changed the economic and business world

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