



— Technology

The revolution of WWW


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Over the past 35 years, the World Wide Web (WWW) has revolutionized nearly every aspect of our lives, profoundly altering how we communicate, learn, work, and interact with the world around us.

Here is the story, in brief, of the famous WWW-acronym¹ and the way it has taken over our lives.

It seems that Sir Tim Berners-Lee, a British scientist working at CERN – the European Organization for Nuclear Research –, was impressed by how some of his Italian colleagues used to transmit information via telephone line from one floor of the institute to another by displaying information via video.

What is certain is that Berners-Lee observed how difficult it was for researchers to access and share information stored on different computers. In **March 1989**, Berners-Lee submitted the document *“Information Management: a Proposal”* to his supervisor: this proposal is recognized as a key moment in the history of the internet, laying the groundwork for the web’s fundamental structure and functionality.

The document outlined the conceptual and architectural framework for what would become the World Wide Web and described a system designed to facilitate the sharing and updating of information among researchers.

Although this project was initially underestimated², Berners-Lee went on to develop the first web browser and web server, and the first web page went live on **6 August 1991**. This marked the birth of the World Wide Web as a public service on the internet. After two years in which it had only been used by the scientific community, CERN decided on **30 April 1993** to make the WWW available to everyone by releasing its source code into the public domain.



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¹ The name reflected the distributed nature of the people and computers that the system could link. It offered the promise of a potentially global system. Friends at CERN gave me a hard time, saying it would never take off, especially since it yielded an acronym that was nine syllables long when spoken. Nonetheless, I decided to forge ahead. I would call my system the “World Wide Web.” (Weaving the Web: the original design and ultimate destiny of the World Wide Web by its inventor, Tim Berners-Lee with Mark Fischetti, HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2000, pg. 23).

² By the end of March 1989 I had given the proposal to Mike Sendall; to his boss, David Williams; and to a few others. I gave it to people at a central committee that oversaw the coordination of computers at CERN. But there was no forum from which I could command a response. Nothing happened (Weaving the Web: the original design and ultimate destiny of the World Wide Web by its inventor, Tim Berners-Lee with Mark Fischetti, HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2000, pg. 22).



The World Wide Web has fundamentally transformed society in many ways, influencing how we live, work, and interact with each other on a daily basis. Here are some of the key ways in which the WWW has impacted on our lives:



Information access and knowledge sharing: the web has made an unprecedented amount of information accessible to anyone with an internet connection. It has democratized access to knowledge, from online encyclopaedias and academic journals to video tutorials and forums for sharing expertise across countless topics.



Communication and social networking: with the advent of email, social media platforms and messaging apps, the web has transformed how we connect with others. It has made it easier to maintain relationships across long distances, meet new people with similar interests, and organize communities around shared causes.



E-commerce and global markets: online shopping and e-commerce platforms have changed how we buy and sell goods and services. Consumers can now access products from around the world with the click of a button, and businesses have access to a global marketplace.



Entertainment and media: the web has revolutionized the entertainment industry, from streaming services like Netflix and Spotify to user-generated content on platforms like YouTube and Twitch. It has changed how we consume music, movies, TV shows, and games, making them more accessible and tailored to individual preferences.



Work and digital economy: remote work, freelancing, and the gig economy have flourished thanks to the web, allowing people to work from anywhere and companies to access a global talent pool. The digital economy has also spurred the creation of new job categories and industries.

Education and e-learning: online education platforms, digital textbooks and virtual classrooms have transformed the educational landscape, making learning more accessible and flexible. Students from around the world can access courses from top universities, and lifelong learning has become easier than ever.



Healthcare and telemedicine: the web has made medical information more accessible to the public and enabled telemedicine, allowing patients to consult with healthcare providers remotely. This has been especially critical in areas with limited access to medical facilities.



Activism and social movements: social media and online platforms have become powerful tools for organizing social movements and raising awareness about issues ranging from climate change to human rights, enabling people to mobilize at an unprecedented scale.



Privacy and security: while the web has brought many benefits, it has also introduced challenges related to privacy, data security and misinformation³. The ease of data collection and the prevalence of social media have raised concerns about personal privacy and the spread of false information.



Cultural exchange and globalization: the web has facilitated cultural exchange and globalization by making it easier for people to share and experience different cultures through music, art, literature, and more, fostering a greater sense of global interconnectedness.



Since March 1989 the development of the World Wide Web has sparked both opportunities and challenges that continue to shape our digital age. Using the words of Michael L. Derouzos, the story of the World Wide Web is *a unique story about a unique innovation, by a unique inventor*⁴.

³ World Economic Forum, *The Global Risk Report 2024*.

⁴ *Weaving the Web: the original design and ultimate destiny of the World Wide Web by its inventor, Tim Berners-Lee with Mark Fischetti, HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2000, pg. ix.*



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