



<http://info.cern.ch>

Welcome to info.cern.ch

The website of the world's first-ever web server

MARCH 2009: A CELEBRATION OF 20 YEARS OF THE WEB

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1990 was a momentous year in world events. In February, Nelson Mandela was freed after 27 years in prison. In April, the space shuttle Discovery carried the Hubble Space Telescope into orbit. And in October, Germany was reunified.

Then at the end of 1990, a revolution took place that changed the way we live today.

CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, is where it all began in March 1989. A physicist, Tim Berners-Lee, wrote a [proposal](#) for information management showing how information could be transferred easily over the Internet by using hypertext, the now familiar point-and-click system of navigating through information. The following year, Robert Cailliau, a systems engineer, joined in and soon became its number one advocate.

The idea was to connect hypertext with the Internet and personal computers, thereby having a single information network to help CERN physicists share all the computer-stored information at the laboratory. Hypertext would enable users to browse easily between texts on web pages using links. [The first examples](#) were developed on NeXT computers.

Berners-Lee created a browser-editor with the goal of developing a tool to make the Web a creative space to share and edit information and build a common hypertext. What should they call this new browser: The Mine of Information? The Information Mesh? When they settled on a name in May 1990, it was the WorldWideWeb.



Tim Berners-Lee followed his dream of a better, easier way to communicate via computers on a global scale, which led him to create the World Wide Web.

Info.cern.ch was the address of the world's first-ever web site and web server, running on a NeXT computer at CERN. The first web page address was <http://info.cern.ch/hypertext/WWW/TheProject.html>, which centred on information regarding the WWW project. Visitors could learn more about hypertext, technical details for creating their own webpage, and even an explanation on how to search the Web for information. There are no



Robert Cailliau, collaborator on the World Wide Web project and first Web surfer.

screenshots of this original page and, in any case, changes were made daily to the information available on the page as the WWW project developed. You may find [a later copy](#) (1992) on the World Wide Web Consortium website.

However, a website is like a telephone; if there's just one it's not much use. Berners-Lee's team needed to send out server and browser software. The NeXT systems however were far advanced over the computers people generally had at their disposal: a far less sophisticated piece of software was needed for distribution.

By spring of 1991, testing was underway on a [universal line mode browser](#), which would be able to run on any computer or terminal. It was designed to work simply by typing commands. There was no mouse, no graphics, just plain text, but it allowed anyone with an Internet connection access to the information on the Web.

During
1991

servers appeared in other institutions in Europe and in December 1991, the first server outside the continent was installed in the US at SLAC (Stanford Linear Accelerator Center). By November 1992, there were 26 servers in the world, and by October 1993 the figure had increased to over 200 known web servers. In February 1993, the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign released the first version of Mosaic, which was to make the Web available to people using PCs and Apple Macintoshes.



The historic NeXT computer used by Tim Berners-Lee in 1990, on display in the Microcosm exhibition at CERN. It was the first web server, hypermedia browser and web editor.

... and the rest is Web history.

Although the Web's conception began as a tool to aid physicists answer tough questions about the Universe, today its usage applies to various aspects of the global community and affects our daily lives.

Today there are upwards of 80 million websites, with many more computers connected to the Internet, and hundreds of millions of users. If households nowadays want a computer, it is not to compute, but to go on the Web.