

20 years of the Web

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Created *06/08/2011 - 6:34pm*

Submitted by srlinuxx on Saturday 6th of August 2011 06:34:07 PM Filed under [Web](#) [1]

In 1991, I'd already been using the Internet for more than a decade. There might have been, at a guess, a million of us then. The Internet we knew was accessed almost entirely by ASCII-based applications like pine and elm for e-mail, command line/shell programs like ftp and Archie for finding and sharing files; and the most advanced tool we had was Gopher, a Yahoo-like guide to Internet resources. Then, Tim Berners-Lee invented the Web and everything changed.

No one saw the revolution at first. The Web, which was running on NeXTStations?Steve Job designed Unix workstations that would prove to be the forefathers of today?s Macs?was something that only a few people even in elite techie Internet circles knew about. In its earliest days, only a few people could access it. Indeed, it wasn?t until early 1993 that the public learned about the Web from a writer named Steven J. Vaughan-Nichols. Looking back, I see I also didn?t quite get it.

[rest here](#) [2]

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