Internet History Archive

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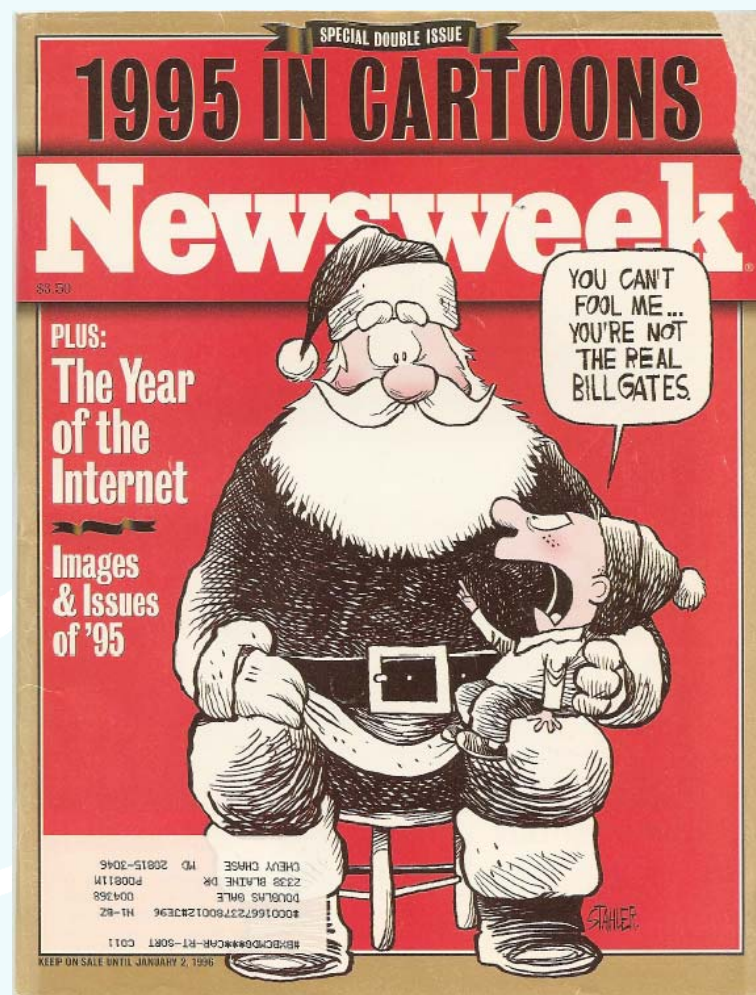
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How Did We Get From

- 213 hosts in 1981

  to

- between 700,000 and 3.2 million hosts connecting somewhere between 2.5 to 32 million people in 1994?

  or stated differently

- How did we get on the cover of Newsweek?

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Goals

- Generate new historical material through the collection of commentaries that include participant's stories, observations, perspectives, and memories.

- Create a digital archive of source materials about the creation and evolution of the Internet.

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Want to Answer Questions

- What combination of historical factors produced such an innovative and rapidly evolving new technology?

- What role did government, business, universities, and individuals play in realizing the modern Internet?

- What accounts for the unusual level of cooperation achieved between traditionally competitive corporate interests, as well as between the private and public sectors?

More Questions

- What lessons might be learned in terms of replicating this success and for both government and corporate efforts to spur technological innovation?

- Is the increasingly cheap and easy flow of information made possible by the Internet a democratizing force for society?

- Is the decentralized manner in which the Internet evolved now embedded in its structure in a way that empowers individuals more than centralized powers?

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And Still More Questions

- How was the development of the Internet different or similar to what had come before, such as the development of telegraph and telephone technologies?
- What do these differences say about the nature of modern societies and their futures?
- What did the Internet innovators themselves believe they were creating?
- What did they think the societal effects might be?
- Were their beliefs and prognostications proven largely correct, or did their invention evolve in ways they could not have imagined?
- How has the Internet affected global societies? Conversely, how might the Internet be seen as a reflection of contemporary social, cultural, and political values?
- What might the future of the Internet be?

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Current Status

- Initiative based upon NSF planning grant

- Currently a volunteer effort

- Substantial material already collected

- Material being placed in public domain

- Need a permanent home

- Advisory Committee to assist in transition

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