Tim Berners-Lee Book

AUTHOR P R HILL

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Extracts from 'Weaving the Web'

Enquire Within Upon Everything

Tim Berners-Lee: When I first began tinkering with a software program that eventually gave rise to the idea of the World Wide Web, I named it Enquire, short for 'Enquire Within upon Everything'. A musty old book of Victorian advice I noticed as a child in my parent's house: outside London. With its title suggestive of magic, the book served as a portal to a world of information, everything from how to remove clothing stains to tips on investing money. Not a perfect analogy for the Web: but a primitive starting point.

What that first bit of Enquire code led me to was something much larger, a vision. The vision I have for the Web is about anything being potentially connected with anything. It is a vision that provides us with new freedom, and allows us to grow faster than we ever could when we were fettered by the hierarchical classification. It leaves the entirety of our previous ways. It leaves our previous fears for the future in addition; it brings the workings if society closer to the workings of our minds.

Unlike Enquire Within upon Everything, the Web that I have tried to foster is not merely a vein of information to be mined, nor is it just a reference or research tool. Despite the fact that the ubiquitous WWW and .com now fuel electronic commerce and stock markets all over the world, this is a large, but just one, part of the Web. Buying books from

Amazon.com and stocks from E-trade is not all there is to the Web. Neither is; the Web some idealized space where we must remove our shoes, eat only fallen fruit, and eschew commercialization.

The irony is that in all its various guises - commerce, research, and surfing - the Web is already so much a part of our lives that familiarity has clouded our minds. To understand the Web in the broadest and deepest sense and to partake, of the vision that my colleagues and I share one must understand how the Web came to be. The story of how the Web was created has many accounts.

The Web resulted from many influences on my mind, half-formed thoughts, disparate conversations, and seemingly disconnected experiments. I pieced it together as I

pursued my regular work and personal life. I articulated the vision, wrote the first Web programs, and came up with the now pervasive acronyms I articulated the vision, wrote the first Web programs, and came up with the now pervasive acronyms URL (then UDI), HTTP, HTML, and, of course, World Wide Web. Many other people, most of them unknown, contributed essential ingredients, in much the same almost random fashion. A group of individuals holding a common dream and working together at a distance brought about a great change.

My telling of the real story will show how the Web's evolution and its essence are inextricably linked. Only by understanding the Web at this deeper level will people ever truly grasp what its full potential can be. Journalists have always asked me what the crucial idea was, or what the singular event was, that allowed the Web to exist one day when it hadn't the day before. They are frustrated when I tell them here was no "Eureka!" moment.

It was not like the legendary apple falling on Newton's head to demonstrate the concept of gravity. Inventing the World Wide Web involved my growing realization that there was a power in arranging ideas in an unconstrained, web-like way. And that awareness came to me through precisely that kind of process. The Web arose as the answer to an open challenge, through the swirling together of influences, ideas, and realizations from many sides, until, by the wondrous offices of the human mind, a new concept jelled. It was a process of accretion, not the linear solving of one well-defined problem after another.

I am the son of mathematicians. My mother and father were part of the team that programmed the world's first commercial, stored-program computer, the Manchester University 'Mark I': which was sold by Ferranti Ltd. in the early 1950s? They were full of excitement over the idea that, in principle, a person could program a computer to do most anything. They also knew, however, that computers were good at logical organizing, and processing, but not random associations.

A computer typically keeps information in rigid hierarchies and matrices, whereas the human mind has the special ability to link random bits of data. When I smell coffee, strong, and stale, I may find myself again in a small room over a corner coffeehouse in Oxford; my brain makes a link, and instantly transports me there. One day when I came home from high school, I found my father working on a speech for Basil de Ferranti.

He was reading books on the brain, looking for clues about how to make a computer intuitive: able to complete connections as the brain did. We discussed the point, then my father went onto his speech, and I went onto my homework. But the idea stayed with me that

computers could become much more powerful, if they could be programmed to link otherwise unconnected information. This challenge stayed on my mind; throughout my studies at Queens College at Oxford University, where I graduated in 1976 with a degree in physics.

It remained in the background when I built my own computer with an early Microprocessor, an old television, and a soldering iron, as well as during the few years I spent as a software engineer with Plessey Telecommunications and with D.G. Nash Ltd. Then, in 1980, 1 took a brief software-consulting job with CERN. That's where I wrote Enquire, my first web-like program. I wrote it in my spare time and for my personal use, and for no loftier reason than to help me remember the connections among the various people, computers: and projects at the lab. Still, the larger vision had taken firm root in my consciousness...

Excerpted from the book: 'Weaving the Web' by permission of publisher HarperCollins.

Authors: Tim Berners-Lee & Mark Fischetti.

Media Reviews

Lotus Development Corp: *President and CEO Jeff Papows:*

"Tim Berners-Lee is the most qualified person on the planet to chronicle the Web. With the introspection and concern only a parent can truly express, he reaches beyond the common sound bytes of our industry to define how the Web is dramatically impacting the very course of humanity."

Sun Microsystem Inc: *Alan Baratz Ph.D. President Java Software:*

"Only one individual has the authority and unique perspective to document the Tim Berners-Lee recounts with indisputable clarity and candour how it all really happened: the politics involved in bringing his model to life at the CERN physics lab, the infamous browser wars, the integration of: Java technology, the creation of W3C; and more." **Qwest Communications International Inc:** *Lew Wilks Multimedia Markets:*

"Anyone who needs to understand the most fundamental change in society since the

Industrial Revolution must read: Weaving the Web. It is the definitive book on where the

Internet has been and where it is going by the person most responsible for its creation."

M I T: *Michael Dertouzos Director »» Laboratory for Computer Science*

"A compelling combination of techno-history and visionary philosophy" **Kirkus**

Reviews:

"Weaving the Web is unique because it was written by Tim Berners-Lee, who created the Web and is now steering it along exciting future directions. No one else can claim that. And no one else can write this the true story of the Web."

Information from: [Bookbrowse](#) **PC**

Week:

"Tim Berners-Lee forever transformed the global business and computing model with the creation of the World Wide Web."

Information from: [Bookbrowse](#)

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