

The History of Web Design in a Nutshell

The Internet didn't begin as an elaborate means of communication for people around the world. In fact, it was created in the 1960s as a way to transfer data between computers via telephone lines. This allowed the transfer of information to and from scientists and military personnel in a very efficient manner. It wasn't until the early 1980s that the Internet became more readily available to doctors, educators, businesses and government agencies.

Early Web Design By the late 1980s, the Internet was being introduced as a means of communication for anyone with a computer, modem and telephone line. In 1993, a new freeware browser program called Mosaic was developed. The success of the program amazed everyone. Within one year, about two million people used the program to view documents they could access via the Internet. The documents were designed to be viewed using hypertext markup language, or HTML. The first websites, now called "first generation sites," had limited graphics, a lot of text and a linear layout. Their function was to deliver information, not to entertain or amaze viewers. During that time, the websites were delivered via dial-up modems over telephone lines. Modems had a very slow transfer rate, so web pages had to have small file sizes for easier accessibility.

Why the W3C Was Established The World Wide Web Consortium, or W3C, was established in 1994. Goals and standards were set for the future of web design. HTML was designated as the primary coding language for future web design endeavors. HTML version 1 was limited but could be built upon. Today, we have versions 2, 3 and 4 and other variations. The standards set by the W3C have made it nearly impossible for large companies to create specific web browsers and potentially develop a monopoly on web design code. If one company had been allowed to dominate web design and browser technologies, it could have had a very detrimental effect on the Internet as we know it today.

Technological Advances in Web Design Web design has been divided into "generations." First-generation websites were primarily text with minimal graphics. Their basic design made it much easier for slower modems to transfer the information in a short amount of time. Second-generation websites were a little more complicated, with more abilities available via HTML. Third-generation websites brought the inclusion of colored backgrounds and animated images. Today's websites are considered the fourth generation. Websites are vibrant and full of color. XML, JavaScript and Flash are just a few of the advanced techniques that allow each individual website to be completely unique. We now have the ability to use code to bring websites to life. Technological advances have given people the ability to add small scripted programs to their websites from the comfort of their home. As a result, web designers can add interactive elements, produce videos or create games to include in websites they design. The W3C still governs coding techniques and provides the guidelines by which websites are created. Smart web designers stick to those practices and guidelines and keep up-to-date on any changes the W3C makes. When designers adhere to the basic rules set forth by the W3C, search engines and browsers can more easily find and index each individual website. Web design is very versatile. The introduction of technologies such as high-speed and wireless Internet has allowed web designers to be more creative with their designs. Websites do not have to conform to first-generation standards any longer and can therefore be more attractive and useful to viewers.

About the Author

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