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Drinking from the Firehose: What do Windows '95, The Internet, and the WWW Have in Common?

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Drinking from the Firehose



What do Windows '95, The Internet and the WWW Have in Common?

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This month's column is going to be a ramble of a number of loosely related topics as I am having a hard time focusing on a single hot topic. In fact, I would like to encourage the readers of *ATG* to send me topics that they think would be interesting and appropriate for this column. (Internet-related phenomena are the general themes.) I would like to recruit more guest columnists. **Anna Belle Leiserson** did a wonderful column last month on *AcqWeb* and I would like to invite others to share their thoughts here too. I do not want to continue making shameless plugs for *ACQNET* and *AcqWeb*; that is not this column's purpose. So, folks, give me some feedback so I will have some fodder to work with!

So how about that **Windows '95**? I think it is amazing that SOFTWARE gets this kind of media blitz. It used to be cameras, or princess phones or new cars that got that kind of attention. But not SOFTWARE. To

me, this is a real watershed in the acceptance of computing in everyday American life. The fact that **Bill Gates** could get the **Rolling Stones** to allow him to use "Start Me Up" in his ad campaign is telling — sort of in the same vein as **Bill Clinton** using a Fleetwood Mac tune as his campaign theme. The baby boomer generation is coming into its own, we're the adults now, and the Oldsters and the Generation Xers are having to face being the bread sandwiching the spread of this crazy generation.

I heard something recently that hit a nerve. The question was: "How old were you when you created your first home page?" That's one of those questions like, "Where were you when Pearl Harbor was bombed?" or "Where were you when Kennedy (John or Bobby) and/or Martin Luther King, Jr., was shot?" or "Where were you when they landed on the moon?" or "Where were you when John Lennon was shot?" or "Where

were you when the Challenger Space Shuttle blew up?"

These are events in our lives where a moment freezes and you remember stupid little details that crystallize the situation. It doesn't matter if you are a child or an adult, but that you were there and somehow it was important. Of course, not everyone thinks the preceding events I just mentioned are so important, they are just examples. You can think of your own, depending on your own experiences.

So, will we remember the day that **Windows '95** was released? Only time will tell, since it still remains to be seen if this product is all it is cracked up to be. One of my computer-expert friends says that **Windows '95** is the "bees knees" if you have a "plug 'n play system" (the newest idiot-proof computer set-ups on the market). However, if you are trying to upgrade on an existing

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system, it's darn difficult, and she ought to know, she's trying to install it now where she works.

Meanwhile, most of us are limping along on a hodge podge of machinery. For those people who love Macintosh, their choice may end up like the Beta-VHS competition. Beta supposedly was a superior product; it just didn't win. Even though DOS-based systems are not intuitive, they reign. And those of us in libraries (as well as other professions, I'm sure), have it even worse as we have to shift amongst many essential, though proprietary, systems. For example: at most libraries, typically staff must know how to use: an integrated library system, bibliographic utility, campus e-mail systems (where I work we currently have at least 3 to choose from), word processing, database management, and spreadsheet packages (several of each to choose from), and vendor based products (too many to count). Then of course there is the Internet and the WWW to deal with. AARGH!

Furthermore, our lives are complicated by VCR's and fax machines we don't know how to program, televisions and answering

machines and a variety of telephones, and a gazillion choices of kitchen appliances and household devices, weed whackers, lawn mowers, not to mention our cars and ATM banking machines. It's a wonder our heads don't explode with all this information at our fingertips.



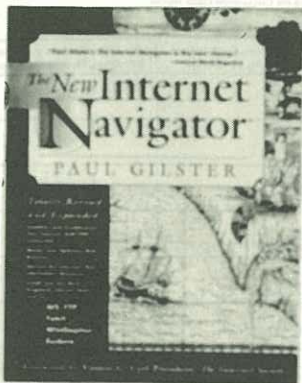
Yet if you look back in history, you'll find mankind has been through this before. We are evolving as we speak. As James Burke recently observed on an episode of "The Day the Universe Changed" on PBS, the human mind can only absorb so much, and we are going through a period where

people are getting slower and slower at regular reading. We are becoming more dependent on graphics and less on symbols. When the printing press was invented, people thought they could know everything because it could all be recorded in this new invention, the printed book. They were overwhelmed by that change in technology just as we are now with the Internet.

What will replace the Internet? I don't know, but I feel like the world is turning into a giant tele-everything! I was showing off the WWW to a friend who isn't Internet-connected the other day. He observed, "So why is everyone duplicating the same things?" Good question — maybe because no one has leapt ahead to the next stage of development. What we need is a worldwide catalog of catalogs. In a way, it's kind of like telephone books. There is no ONE telephone book; communities have their own. And people keep their own lists of frequently called numbers with addresses; kind of like bookmarking your favorite home pages.

One thing is for sure, at the rate change is happening, this column, whether it's me who writes it or someone else, should have plenty to comment upon for years to come! 🍷

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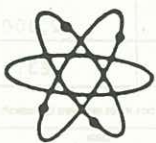
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