

RFC3271: The Internet is for Everyone

An Interview with Vinton G. Cerf

by Claudio Allocchio & Giorgio Giunchi - 2005 Nov. 25



5 very informal questions... feel free to openly comment, modify, insert opinions... whatever....

When did you started to think about your RFC "the internet is for everyone!", the "manifesto" of the Internet, as somebody call it now?

Actually, that phrase arose from interactions with the ISOC Internet Societal Task Force (ISTF) and specifically, from ideas expressed by Sascha Ignjatovic (who recently changed his name to Thomas Anderson) and a woman whose name is escaping me (perils of old age).

The two of them were the spark plugs behind the ISTF. Although the ISTF foundered because of internal squabbles over procedures and the like, the idea still resonates with me, as does that important phrase: The Internet is for Everyone.

While writing it, who were the "targets" in your mind? the network community? those who still are not on-line? both?

I wanted to emphasize the inclusiveness that I thought should motivate and inform all aspects of Internet operation, deployment, policy, use, technology, etc.

Internet should be accessible and available to everyone at a cost that is affordable. It should be open and inclusive (even to the extent of including information that might be objectionable to some people - that is no doubt my American First Amendment bias showing).

I was especially concerned that the capabilities and information on the Internet be accessible to those with disabilities and to those in impoverished economic circumstances.

I still think that way. My primary targets in that campaign were the technical designers, the ISPs, the billions who were not yet online, governments with the wherewithal to help make it so.

In early 2002 you exactly guessed the future numbers for the internet development:

1 billion subscribers by the end of 2005. An educated guess, or a lot of guess only?

I have been tracking the statistics and making projections since 1988.

Some have not been on target but I must say that a billion is pretty exciting - but we have 5.5 billion to go!!!

Which is the comment about you and the Internet which you like best? and the one which made you think more? and the most "odd" and curious?

I think it is a misnomer to refer to me as "the father of the Internet" but I take great satisfaction in having been a part of this project for over 30 years now.

I hope I will be remembered as someone who cared enough to devote an entire career (and more than half a lifetime) to the continued expansion of the Internet and the development of new functions for it to support.

The most disturbing references are those that fail to appreciate the contributions of hundreds of thousands of other people.

To try for an analogy, Bob Kahn and I may have devised the rules for the roads on which the cars and truck run and for the basic parameters of these vehicles, but others actually built the roads and designed the cars and the trucks that can use them. Our role, and that of many colleagues has been catalytic and could not have been successful were it not for the enormous efforts of millions who have chosen to spread access to and operation of the Internet and its many applications.

One billion of terrestrial subscribers... :-) when do you think to update RFC3271 with... aliens? one comment?

We have some Martian robots that are sending enormous amounts of information back to Earth today - the Spirit and Opportunity Mars Exploration Rovers. The Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter is on its way to help scout for new landing places for the future Mars Science Laboratory.

The Interplanetary Internet is in development at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory through a program of standardization of deep space protocols that overcome the effects of long delays and disruption in communication caused by celestial motion and other impairments.

I hope to see the day when I can issue a new RFC welcoming at least robotic members of the Internet, perhaps a new generation of lunar astronauts.

It would be truly exciting to be able to write about Martian Internauts working on the surface of that planet but I guess my time will be over before that day comes.

I thrill to its possibilities nonetheless and hope that a future generation will write with equal passion about the Interplanetary network and society to come.

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-http://rfc3271.org/comments/cerf_25_11_2005.html

-http://cctld.it/storia/cerf_3271.html

-http://www.isoc.it/documenti/20051125_Cerf-interview.pdf