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The Internet - One year after 9/11

Fall 2002

The foundation of our country was rocked hard last year by terrorists - our lives have changed...

When the planes struck the World Trade Center a year ago—our lives changed and so did the Internet. But why? How could this change our lives when it comes to the 'Net?

INTERNET: One Year After 9/11

by Lynie Arden



Web Guide..



[Commemorating Lost Lives](#)

The Unity in the Spirit of America Act, signed by President Bush on January 10 as an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill, called for the Points of Light Foundation—which partnered with the Volunteer Center National Network—to identify and organize at least 5,000 volunteer service projects across the United States by September 11, 2002, each in tribute to one of the victims of the September 11 attacks.

[Window of Horror](#)

Magnum Photographers offers a series of sometimes gruesome, but real photos, of the day America was attacked.

[Philanthropy's Response to 9/11](#)

Can you imagine what life would be like if you lost your Internet connection for a week? How about if that was a week of disaster? In the days following the 9/11 attacks, millions of Americans came to realize just how important their life in cyberspace really is.

Reaching Out to Touch Someone

It's a good thing Americans had more than telephones and snail mail on 9/11. It's doubtful the system could have withstood the traffic as we tried desperately to keep in touch. Fortunately, we had e-mail.

During this first national crisis since the beginning of the Internet, more than 100 million Americans exchanged personal messages via e-mail and even more through instant messenger applications. It profoundly effected how we communicate, giving us a new way to connect emotionally with friends, family, and colleagues. Plus, people around the world used e-mail and the Internet to extend emotional support to Americans in a way that was never possible before. In the past e-mail was often considered an impersonal medium for communicating, but no more.

The Internet Comes of Age

On 9/11 and the months following, Internet use reached new record levels, jumping 15 percent according to Nielsen. There was not only more traffic, but traffic patterns also changed. For the first time in the history of the Internet, the word "sex" did not appear in the top ten most popular search terms at Alta Vista. Instead we searched for CNN, anti-terrorism, and Osama bin Laden. We wanted details on everything from anthrax to cluster bombs.

Although information is what the Internet is all about, at first most people got their news about 9/11 on TV. After the first few days though, the Internet was the best place to get up-to-the-minute news. News sites experienced massive increases in traffic. MSNBC.com, which normally saw a few hundred users on



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the site at any given moment, suddenly had up to 22,000 page requests at a time.

The Net was the only place to get personal news. Websites sprang up overnight with lists of victims, possible victims, and their locations. There were bulletin boards to post messages and pleas for information about missing loved ones. Businesses stayed afloat by posting office closures with forwarding addresses and contact information.

The Internet provided a very efficient way of tracking mountains of information that changed from minute to minute. Since 9/11, we've learned that we can keep up with fast-changing local events, too. This summer, during the worst fire season in recent history, local TV news stations were able to issue pictures, maps, and instructions on forest fires in Oregon – in real time. With the Net, there's no need to wait until the 6 o'clock news for updates on dangerous situations.

Many businesses lost their physical locations on 9/11, but they kept on conducting business by telecommuting from home offices and satellite locations. Why wait for a new office when you've got a computer and modem? With travel completely halted for several days and then restricted severely, the Web-based conferencing market boomed. This wasn't a temporary adjustment either. Once businesses realized how efficient business conferencing on the Web was, it mushroomed into a multi-billion dollar industry.

Access Denied

Before 9/11, we assumed we had open access to "public" information. That's changed. Freedom of information is no longer automatic. After 9/11, government agencies immediately started pulling information off its Websites, concerned that we should not be providing information that could be used by terrorists to do damage.

Scores of sites shut down completely amid growing fears of cyber-terrorism. Until now, most cyber-terrorists (hackers) have been talented amateurs creating havoc for self-gratification. About .1% could be considered world-class cyber-criminals, available for hire and capable of doing major damage. They could do a lot with maps of power grids, a registry of toxic substances, and layouts for dams and reservoirs. Any information that revealed vulnerable spots in the U.S. infrastructure has quietly disappeared.

The chilling effect of anti-terrorism is the unbridled demand for censorship. Librarians and others received alarming orders to destroy data in the name of national security. Removing sensitive data may make things somewhat more difficult for terrorists, but it is also inconvenient for the public, particularly journalists. An official obsession with secrecy has made the job of the journalist more difficult. Journalists who now see "Access Denied" notices on sites that were previously favorite hunting grounds for background information are being forced to sharpen their search skills.

But destroying information on the Net isn't so easy. Once uploaded onto the Web, it's still out there somewhere. Even if the information hasn't been copied onto other sites, it's somewhere in the enormous Internet Archive (a non-profit project that stores a history of the Web). Plus, a number of watchdog sites are documenting what's missing or being threatened with extinction.

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Written by Lynie Arden

It became clear shortly after 9/11 that the initial pledges and contributions to relief efforts would need to be tracked over time to create an accurate record of philanthropy's response to the 9/11 attacks. In keeping with its historical role, the Foundation Center is creating a comprehensive record of foundation and corporate giving for relief and recovery efforts, as well as tracking the additional impacts the events of September 11 may have on grantmaker programs and policies

Others around the West...

[The Impact of 9/11 on the Insurance Industry](#)

In an exclusive streaming audio interview, Catherine Tapia, senior managing editor of Insurance Journal, interviews Schroeder, who will primarily address the impact on the insurance industry of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, including the latest figures on insured losses; significant changes likely to occur within the property/casualty industry; long-term regulatory implications; the current

reinsurance
environment; and
the industry's
overall
performance since
Sept. 11.
(approximate
running time -- 20
minutes).