

To the Editor February 24, 2020

## Free the Internet

First, a bit of history. The first version of the Internet was born as a science project of the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the United States Department of Defense. ARPANET as it was known in the late 1960s, was developed primarily for military use, and was funded mainly by US Government National Science Foundation (NSF) grant monies. At the time, Senator Al Gore Jr. from Tennessee, was a visionary on this subject, and thus was instrumental in advocating for this funding. The ARPANET was fundamentally about linking static read-only scientific and academic materials together, to assist the DOD with advanced forward thinking research much of it being conducted at universities all around the country.

The second version of the Internet came around 1995 when this primarily scientific and academic network was opened to the general public and the control and management of it turned over to a nonprofit organization called IETF. The Internet Engineering Task Force is an open standards international membership-based non-profit organization, which develops and promotes voluntary Internet standards. The Internet founders, including Tim Berners-Lee, also formed WW3, the World Wide Web Consortium as a standards body. It is interesting to note that Berners-Lee basically invented the web and then turned it over to the world.

As a reflection of humble beginnings, for the first 20 years domain registration was handled by one guy, [Jon Postel](#). Then they formed ICANN, The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers. It is responsible for coordinating the maintenance and procedures the databases related to the namespaces and numerical spaces of the Internet, (called DNS) ensuring the network's stable and secure operation. They also started charging for registering domain names. The Internet remained in a beta (developmental) stage, being originally developed and designed for sharing of information by people based on an idealistic honor system. This then further developed into a linked data semantic web with the development of a browser, funded with grant money by guess who? The NSF, again.

When corporations started driving the WW3 is where things started to go wrong. This is when the original decentralization standard was murdered and corporations started to seize control and enact its perverted vision of Manifest Destiny over the data of citizens worldwide. The founders believed that the Internet/Web was about augmenting our collective intelligence as a species. A fight has been raging to overcome this evil ever since, despite the oversized egos of the builder hackers, and to bring decentralized identity verification for financial transactions and social media applications to the Web.

This public opening also led to the incubation of many startup companies driving ecommerce, the expansion of access to human knowledge, the proliferation of both digital music and cat video's, as well as tremendous economic and social growth. This second version was fundamentally about being interactive for read and write and for linking to programs which by the 2000's had evolved to include social media, and a large number of new businesses.

Those of us who enjoyed this phase during the 1990's now look back fondly at how joyful this experience was, even on a 56k or slower dialup connection, or 256k slow broadband connection. We now look back ashamedly at how single mindedly technically focused, and naïve we were about the dirty world around us.

Back in the 1990's no one had worried about all the disparate data being collected by the earlier computers, because we thought we knew there would never be a way to aggregate it all these disparate databases into anything useful to anyone. We were all wrong, very, very, horribly wrong.

The unregulated profit incentives birthed server farms, and Internet clouds, web crawlers, bots, and the algorithms to find, manipulate, and sort the big data of first a nation, and then the entire planet. These corporations have now built these dystopian parasitic surveillance machines which prey on the entire human species.

Millions and then billions of simple minded and uninformed humans acted like lemmings all stepping off digital cliffs and into the corporate clouds. Their personal data is vacuumed like some giant digital spider spinning its web to entrap them and then sucking dry anything that smells like personal data from the transfer pipes containing the digital lives of billions of people on the planet.

Corporations profited from and used this data harvested through this predatory surveillance capitalism to alter the thinking, habits, purchases, and voting preferences of the masses in the now damaged and failing democracies. Yet these lemmings continued to carry these tracking devices with them and placed additional dystopian surveillance machine devices in their homes, on their homes, and in their cars, being misled by some misguided sense of convenience. They did this of course, because their connected parasitic devices told them to.

Those around the world now impoverished, unemployed and without hope from being on the wrong end of Western Empire building, became criminals to survive and who seek out your money with phishing emails for malware and ransomware attacks on your computers.

Hacking is now persistent and accelerating in the number of ransomware, spyware, malware, and other computer intrusions and infections. This is due most of the entire world being able to access the Internet and those with bad intent able to scan the globe for individual computer weaknesses. It no longer matters if you are an individual, a small business, or a large one. You will be targeted if a weakness is spotted, regardless.

And of course, the American National Security Agency or NSA is hovering up all worldwide digital communications under the guise of Signals Intelligence (SISINT). Using their significant computer power to translate all of these zeros and ones into Human Intelligence (HUMINT) to know everything about everyone. "Collect it all", they said. They are storing all of this data on a server farm in Utah... forever.

So obviously based on the current rate of hacking of systems, resulting data breaches, and data collection, we know our software tools in use now are badly broken. People are being harmed, and some would go even further to say robbed, enslaved, and terrorized. I dread the day when some mad genius applies Artificial Intelligence (AI) to these hacking tools and fundamentally kills the Internet as we know it. Perhaps we will all then need to hide out on the Dark Web, although the TOR browser has its own problems with metadata leakage and with NSA monitoring of the entry and exit nodes.

"Privacy is necessary for an open society in the electronic age. Privacy is not secrecy. A private matter is something one doesn't want the whole world to know, but a secret matter is something one doesn't want anybody to know. Privacy is the power to selectively reveal oneself to the world". Eric Hughes, 1993

*"Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask those of you from the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather."* — John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace" February, 1996 <https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence>

Yet the very insecure idealistic open architecture of the Internet web is what prevents privacy today.

### **Enter The Web3 Foundation.**

Right now, the third version of the Internet is under construction, introducing a new wave of computing. It is long past time we move beyond the 20<sup>th</sup> Century beta version of the Internet and move to a 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Century version of computation and storage. These are the two fundamental elements of the Internet.

The Web 3 Foundation believes in an Internet network where:

- Users, not corporate intermediaries, own their own personal data

- Computer networks should efficiently and securely serve the needs of an age where all transactions are becoming digital
- Online exchanges of digital information don't rely on centralized, vulnerable caches of personal information

It does not lobby for laws on data protection, which by their very nature assume continued data collection, and offer data protection by leveeing financial fines. Rather they are proactively working toward a future where Internet communications and financial transactions are not personally identifiable thus they are not collectable. This is a return to the original decentralization of the Internet before the corporate move to an advertisement funded business model with a quest to sell your personal information for revenues. It is fundamentally about read and write and trust with verification for ethical integrity. It will give users ownership and power over their own personal data. But it is also a technology wave move from a pre-computer civilization to a post-computer civilization. Software is now eating the world. (changing everything)

You can think of this system as everyone having a pile of Civic tokens (CVC's), or NYM tokens. Think of this as a bucket of Internet if you like, that will allow you for example to go into a gas station and buy a bad sandwich or an overpriced bottle of water and no one else will know, collect, or store this personal data about you. <https://www.identity.com/> This will be possible through the use of encryption, the masking of metadata, minimizing metadata leakage, (data about data) as well as smart software code to build technologies, and similar block chain storage technologies but without chain analysis, currently used for digital money. It is being designed as a peer-to-peer (P2P) decentralized system, to take power from the few and give it back to the many. Web3 helps you prove yourself, your identity, your intention, in an open, extensible, and transparent manner.

**Support the Web3 Foundation! Less Trust. More Truth.** <https://web3.foundation/about/>

*"With Google and Facebook, we have legalized the abuse of the person, through the personal. We have entrenched a system that makes the population vulnerable for the benefit of the privileged. The only way to protect anyone is to protect everyone. "* Ed Snowden