

The History of HTML and How It Revolutionized the Internet



Some of the people who drive the transformation of the internet are well-known: think Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. But those who developed its inner workings are often totally unknown, anonymous, and unsung in an age of hyper-information that they themselves helped to create.

Definition of HTML

HTML is the authoring language used to create documents on the web. It is used to define the structure and layout of a web page, how a page looks, and any special functions. HTML does this by using what are called tags that have attributes. For example, `<p>` means a paragraph break. As the viewer of a web page, you don't see HTML; it is hidden from your view. You see only the results.

Vannevar Bush

Vannevar Bush was an engineer born at the end of the 19th century. By the 1930s he was working on analog computers and in 1945 wrote the article "As We May Think," published in the Atlantic Monthly. In it, he describes a machine he called memex, which would store and retrieve information via microfilm. It would consist of screens (monitors), a keyboard, buttons, and levers. The system he discussed in this article is very similar to HTML, and he called the links between various pieces of information associative trails. This article and theory laid the foundation for Tim Berners-Lee and others to invent the World Wide Web, HTML (hypertext markup language), HTTP (HyperText Transfer Protocol), and URLs (Universal Resource Locators) in 1990. Bush died in 1974 before the web existed or the internet became widely known, but his discoveries were seminal.

Tim Berners-Lee and HTML

Tim Berners-Lee, a scientist and academic, was the primary author of HTML, with the assistance of his colleagues at CERN, an international scientific organization based in Geneva. Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web in 1989 at CERN. He was named one of Time magazine's 100 most important people of the 20th century for this accomplishment.

Berners-Lee's browser editor was developed in 1991-92. This was a true browser editor for the first version of HTML and ran on a NeXt workstation. Implemented in Objective-C, it, made it easy to create, view, and edit web documents. The first version of HTML was formally published in June 1993.