

Archives

[Wayback Machine](#)

While the Internet Archive preserves many different kinds of materials, the Wayback Machine's enormous archive of web pages is perhaps its crown jewel. The archive contains crawled web pages from 1996 to the present, but it has extremely limited search capacity. To make use of its riches, you will to find URLs first.

[Oocities](#)

This is a hobbyist archive of Geocities, a platform service that allowed users to create their own web pages. It has almost no search capacity; the most efficient way to find pages is to search for “neighborhoods” dedicated to a particular theme, in a trial-and-error process.

[Million Short](#)

The real task before researchers interested in the early 2000s web is to find URLs. Google prioritizes recent results; this search engine offers the option to not show the first 100, 1000, 10 000, 100 000, or million results of a given query. This makes it possible to search more deeply and find older, less well-established web pages, including those that have not been updated since the early 2000s.

[Wiby](#)

Another way to find URLs to feed to the Wayback Machine is to use this search engine, which only queries web pages that are formatted and designed the way web pages in the late 1990s and early 2000s were. Its aim is to counter the search-and-answer character of the contemporary internet and reconnect users with the “real joy” of finding web pages they did not know they wanted to find.

[Issuecrawler](#)

This service presents more labor-intensive but potentially very effective way to find URLs. Set the crawler loose on a web page or web pages, and it produces a list (and a networked graph) of all the pages linked to by the starting page(s). This quickly generates large lists of URLs and works well with networked web pages, such as blogs, but be warned: if the web page contains too many built-in links (think: a “share to Twitter” button), the list the Issuecrawler produces will not be as meaningful.

Scholarship

Ankerson, Megan Sapnar. <i>Dot-Com Design: The Rise of a Usable, Social, Commercial Web</i> . New York: NYU Press, 2018.
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This is a book about the 1990s web that explains why the web of the early 2000s looked and felt the way it did. The first two chapters focus on the period before 1995, which saw the number of web servers explode without any way to for users to efficiently locate or navigate their contents. They relied on “hotlists” of other people’s favorites to find their way in a decentralized, nonhierarchical whole. Drawing on design theory and media studies, further chapters make sense of the years after 1995, when the dotcom bubble gathered steam and the web became increasingly navigable and exploitable thanks to design innovations. The final chapter explicitly reflects on the 2000-2005 period as the time when these 1990s developments came to fruition. In addition to the explicit

reflections on what it means to do web history, this book is valuable in its problematization of any neat separations between the 1990s and the 2000s, or the pre- and post-dotcom bubble web.

Brügger, Niels. *The Archived Web: Doing History in the Digital Age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2023.

This book reflects on the web as a site for historical scholarship. Its chapters present characteristics of the online web that are significant for scholars, investigate how and to what effect the online web became the archived web, and explore how the particular digitality of the archived web can affect a historian's research process. The book offers suggestions for how to translate traditional historiographic methods for the study of the archived web, focusing on provenance, creating an overview of the archived material, evaluating versions, and citing the material. Scholars looking to quickly find their way will find chapters 4 ("Cases of Web History") and 6 ("The Web of the Past – Where to Find What?"), which lay out the different scales of analysis (from individual website to online cultural domain) and where different kinds of materials can be located, especially helpful.

Dijk, José van. *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013.

This history of social media traces the movement from amateur-driven community platforms to the large corporations of the 2010s. Focused on five major platforms – Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, and Wikipedia – that claim to facilitate users' connections with each other, this book traces the rise of "sociality" as a primary characteristic of the World Wide Web in the post-2005 period. The introduction is particularly helpful in its overview of the historical shift from a decentralized and nonhierarchical web first to the "platform" as the primary online meeting place and then to the social media platform as a global information and data mining company. Online sociality has changed significantly in the 2000-2010 period, and this book maps how.

Frank-Wilson, Marion. "The Preservation of African Websites as Historical Sources." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, 2021.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.690>.

This article reflects on the archiving of African websites. Efforts to preserve and archive African web contents as historical resources have been relatively few and sporadic. Rather than relying on the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, which automatically preserves websites through a web crawler but that cannot be depended on to archive every hyperlink or even every subpage or new version of existing pages, libraries and archives use the Internet Archive's subscription-based tool Archive-It to capture web content at a selective, deep, subpage level. Website archiving is often a national project, pursued through library and museum institutes that receive government funding to do so. This essay underlines that durable and effective archiving of African websites will depend on collaborative relationships between historians and librarians and strong partnerships with African stakeholders.

Helmond, Anne. "A Historiography of the Hyperlink: Periodizing the Web through the Changing Role of the Hyperlink." In *The SAGE Handbook of Web History*, edited by Niels Brügger and Ian Milligan, 227–41. London: SAGE Publications, 2019.

The hyperlink was crucial to the rise of the World Wide Web. This chapter uses the development of the hyperlink to periodize web history, defining three episodes: early hypertext systems used in specialized settings, the World Wide Web as dependent on the hyperlink to become navigable, and the era of search engines that use hyperlinks as a measurement of relevance. Hyperlinks also became integral to the “blogosphere,” as this chapter captures, and to social media platforms, which use them to measure user actions. The chapter ultimately theorizes the development of the hyperlink as a window onto the commercialization of the web in the first decade of the 2000s.

Hillis, Ken, Michael Petit, and Kylie Jarrett. *Google and the Culture of Search*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

This is a media-theoretical exploration of the famous search engine’s cultural heft. The book seeks to understand the ascendancy of search and its naturalization by historicizing and contextualizing Google’s dominance of the search industry; chapter 1, “Growing Up Google,” offers a fine-grained historical overview of Google’s rise to almost complete market control. The contemporary culture of search is inextricably bound up with a metaphysical longing to manage, order, and categorize all knowledge. Calling upon this nexus between political economy and metaphysics, the chapters trace an increasingly networked culture in which search technology could become, by 2010, perhaps *the* site of knowledge and power.

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

This book outlines what marketing and advertising professionals thought the internet had become by the end of the 2000s. Online, it seemed that the consumer was no longer passive. Instead, on what came to be called Web 2.0 to distinguish it from a more information-driven Web 1.0, every user participated: by sharing – sociality is crucial to Web 2.0 – or by creating content themselves. This book makes sense of this development by contrasting the concepts of “stickiness” – aggregating attention in centralized places – with “spreadability” – dispersing content widely through both formal and informal networks. In this age, the authors argue, participation is the greatest good.

John, Nicholas A. “Sharing.” In *Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society and Culture*, edited by Benjamin Peters, 269–77. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016.

This article, dedicated to what became one of the most important buzzwords on the internet of the early 2000s, considers the great optimism about the internet’s effect on society that characterized this period. It analyzes the emergence and development of the word sharing in forty-four different social media network sites from 1999 to 2010. This reveals a trend in the usage of the word, from the specific to the far more general, and the introduction of the word to describe existing activities that had previously been called something else (posting, sending, updating, etc.). Sharing is the constitutive activity of Web 2.0, bearing the promise that today’s network and mobile technologies – because they make it easier for us and encourage us to share extensively – will bring about a better world.

Kim, Jin. “The Institutionalization of YouTube: From User-Generated Content to Professionally Generated Content.” *Media, Culture & Society* 34, no. 1 (2012): 53–67.

This article examines the institutionalization of YouTube, i.e. its transformation from a user-generated content website, part of the web 2.0 turn toward sharing and sociality, into a professionally-generated content video site. This development of institutionalization, becoming part of the traditional media environment in its legal constraints on the distribution of broadcasting content and in the establishment of smooth links between content and commercials, is inseparable from Google's purchase of the platform in 2005. The article considers whether the emancipatory promise attributed to user-generated media – democratic, creative outlets that are highly accessibility and have the potential to serve as an online library for users – ought to be rethought in light of the technological and economic constraints that can be seen at work in YouTube's 2000s development.

Mackinnon, Katie. "The Death of GeoCities: Seeking Destruction and Platform Eulogies in Web Archives." *Internet Histories* 6, no. 1–2 (2022): 237–52.

This article attends to GeoCities, once one of the most popular platforms on the web. It allowed users to make their own web pages. GeoCities blossomed in the second half of the 1990s and declined in popularity over the course of the 2000s, after Yahoo's 1999 purchase of the company. This article focuses on "platform eulogies" posted by users who mourned the platform as it once was and articulated the reasons for its decline. In the case of GeoCities, these eulogies are preserved in different web archives, where they offer insights into the corporate and social tensions that would eventually lead to GeoCities, once lauded as the paradigmatic example of how the internet allowed each user to express themselves creatively, declining to a state of near total non-use.

Peters, John Durham. "God and Google." In *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*, 315–76. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

This media-philosophical exploration of Google connects the company's services to much older dreams of perfect maps, complete libraries, and absolute knowledge. The chapter makes a twofold argument about these dreams and Google's ambitions. The first is that Google provides an essentially logistical service – it does not contain all text, all knowledge, and all time, it just connects subjects and objects efficiently. It is not a culture industry; it is in the business of organization – a fact that ties in with the book's overarching theorization of media as providing orientation rather than content. The second argument, building on the first, is that omniscience is unavoidably patchy. No map is perfect, no library complete, and the long history of theological thought underlines that a God who knows everything is an impossibility. Google, representative of our "storage-crazy moment," would do well to remember that loss and forgetting, incompleteness and slippage, are essential.

Phillips, Whitney. *This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things: Mapping the Relationship between Online Trolling and Mainstream Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015.

This book was one of the first to consider the downsides or risks of Web 2.0's participatory possibilities: trolling. To troll is to intentionally elicit as many upset reactions as possible, often by drawing on racism and other cruelties. In its first seven chapters, this book tracks how trolling went from a subcultural form of humor, a playful register on 4chan, in the first half of the 2000s to the purposeful destabilizing and shocking of mainstream news media by the second half. The book's main argument is that trolling is not deviant. Trolls' actions are born and fueled by culturally sanctioned impulses; they do not differ meaningfully from sensationalist corporate media. The

dissolution of distinctions between mainstream media and audience was one of the first places where the downsides of a web that emphasized participation above all could be seen.

Sreberny, Annabelle, and Gholam Khiabany. *Blogistan: The Internet and Politics in Iran*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

The Arab Spring, which occurred in the early 2010s, inspired many scholarly arguments about the connection between social media participation and organizing in the fight for democracy. This book about early 2000s blogging in Iran serves almost as a prelude to this scholarship. Is the internet an agent of social change; a place where a culture of dissidence can blossom? This book contrasts the state's exercise of control over the Iranian internet with the actual state of blogging, both within Iran and in the English-speaking diaspora. While bloggers should not be stereotyped as dissidents, the 2009 protests in the wake of Iran's disputed presidential election underlined that internet was changing things in ways neither the government nor the democracy movement anticipated.

Weber, Marc. "Browsers and Browser Wars." In *The SAGE Handbook of Web History*, edited by Niels Brügger and Ian Milligan, 270–96. London: SAGE Publications, 2019.

This chapter traces the history of the browser: software that made the internet, a research network used by academic and military specialists, as easy to use as online services (e.g., AOL, CompuServe) had proven to be. It offers a detailed and accessible explanation of the World Wide Web's beginnings, with the browser as a crucial final development. The browser's importance for wider adaptation made it an instrument of power; whoever makes the browser that most people use determines what the predominant uses of the network will be. The so-called browser wars of the 1990s – between Netscape and Internet Explorer, or Internet Explorer and Firefox – were a struggle over the internet's future. The outcome of these battles made the early 2000s web what it was.

Webster, Peter. "Existing Web Archives." In *The SAGE Handbook of Web History*, edited by Niels Brügger and Ian Milligan, 30–41. London: SAGE Publications, 2019.

This chapter presents an overview of web archiving as it stood in the late 2010s. It contains a section that offers a brief history of web archiving initiatives, distinguishing between the Internet Archive as a non-profit that is not beholden to any particular group, national libraries subject to government priorities, and smaller, issue-specific archiving initiatives such as the Columbia University Human Rights Web Archive. The chapter also introduces different crawlers used for web archiving, and connects these technical characteristics – and the nature of the archiving initiative – to the overall structures of the archives they make possible. In the reflections on how to use web archives, the chapter underlines that search, now the primary mode of online engagement, is still not a possibility in working with these historical resources.

Miscellaneous

[Video](#)

This 1997 "Moms on the Net" video special is not just funny in its corniness, but also offers a remarkably thorough explanation of what the internet is (compared to online services) and how it might be used in the years ahead.

Essay

This essay uses the rise and fall of America Online, the most popular online service provider in the era of “static” web pages, to ask whether the social media giants buoyed by Web 2.0 are not repetitions of these early “walled gardens.”

Article

This article chronicles highs and lows in the career of Heather Armstrong, the most famous “mommy blogger” of the early 2000s, an era when blogs about the realities of motherhood seemed the pinnacle of the genre. Her trajectory reflects the transition from the static written web page to the interactive and commercial Web 2.0 “influencer.”