



## Technical Architecture

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# GeoIP

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BBC Digital Planet

**DigitalP: 09 March 10: Eve economy**

Eve economy; web behaviour test; Love Clean Streets; EpiSurveyor

BBC - technology news

### **Tories may 'lose broadband vote'**

Research suggests that key Tory constituencies could suffer most from the Conservative policy on super-fast broadband.

## **Dotcom marks silver anniversary**

The internet domain name dotcom celebrates its 25th anniversary as nearly 86 million active internet sites now use it.

## **China's stern warning to Google**

China's top internet official warns that Google will "pay the consequences" if it does not comply with censorship laws.

## **Net clash for web police projects**

A row is brewing over separate projects to use the web to bring people closer to their local police forces.

## **HSBC admits huge Swiss data theft**

About 24,000 clients of HSBC's private banking operation in Switzerland had personal details stolen, the bank admits.

## **Tweeting 'fundamental' in life**

Twitter co-founder Evan Williams believes social networks will become a fundamental way the public communicates with government.

## **Microsoft rebuffed in Word appeal**

Microsoft has lost a second appeal in a case that will see it pay \$240m (Â£160m) in damages to software firm i4i.

## **'Console killer' launches in June**

A gaming service that aims to kill off the traditional gaming console will begin streaming games over the net in June this year.

## **Apollo men decry Obama Moon plans**

Nasa Moon astronauts tell the BBC President Barack Obama's decision to cancel the US lunar programme is "catastrophic".

## **Passing it on**

The race to get the UK online begins to gather pace

## **Been and dotgone**

Remember QXL and Beenz? 10 now defunct dotcoms

## **Top 100 sites**

Explore the biggest websites and what do they do

## **Powering up**

Japan's home fuel-cell tech to take on Europe

## **dot.Rory**

What are the UK's dotcom pioneers doing now?

## **Farming future**

The dawning age of the agricultural automatons

## **Telegraph poles for broadband**

Virgin Media has begun trials of technology to deliver high-speed fibre-optic broadband over telegraph poles in the UK.

## **Tories pledge 'fastest broadband'**

The Conservatives say they will make Britain the first country in Europe to have widespread super-fast broadband.

## **Sony shows off motion controller**

Sony reveals details about its new motion controller the PlayStation Move, as a contender to market leader Nintendo Wii.

## **Mobile phone allows snooping**

Mobile technology that could allow prying bosses to monitor every movement of their staff is developed in Japan.

## **Internet up for Nobel Peace Prize**

The internet is among a record 237 individuals and organisations nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

## **Facebook calls for 'iconic games'**

Facebook calls on game designers to make an iconic title, such as Mario or Halo, specifically for the social network.

## **File-sharing sanctions 'unfair'**

Illegal file-sharers should be fined, rather than have their internet connection cut off, says the boss of BT.

## **Hard drive evolution could hit XP**

Hard drives are about to undergo one of the biggest format shifts in 30 years but it could cause problems for Windows XP users.

## **Has copyright gone too far?**

Has copyright gone too far? asks Bill Thompson.

## **Open society and open systems**

Openness must be defended, says Bill Thompson.

## **The past is the future for tech**

Bill Thompson keeps an eye on the future

## **The media and the message**

Innovation is the key for papers says Bill Thompson

## **Mobile boom fuels health work**

Phones transform healthcare in the developing world

## **Sun spotters protect the Earth**

Your help is needed to watch the surface of the Sun

## **Keeping gadgets safe and sound**

Hi-tech to stop gadgets being stolen

## **Making the most of Twitter**

Essential guide for getting more out of Twitter

# Digital Revolution

# Internet Blog

## Guardian - technology news

### **Lib Dems to alter digital economy bill amendment**

Rights group calls for bill to be abandoned as peers reverse key changes

The Liberal Democrats are preparing to change their controversial amendment to the digital economy bill, which has its third and final reading in the House of Lords on Monday.

The change would give sites blocked under the bill the power to challenge it in the courts, and to demand legal costs and damages from any copyright owner that caused it to be wrongly blocked through court proceedings.

But the Open Rights Group, which campaigns on digital rights and freedoms, said that the amendment would not solve deeper problems with the bill – which may be rushed into law with barely any debate in the Commons – and called for it to be abandoned.

Amendments tabled to the bill show that the Liberal Democrats now want to alter amendment 120A, which was shown last week to have been copied almost word-for-word from a lobbying paper prepared by the music industry, but which was also widely criticised as giving copyright holders too much power to close down sites on limited evidence.

The Liberal Democrat peer Lord Razzall has moved an amendment to the amendment created by another Lib Dem peer, Lord Clement-Jones, which would give sites that have been blocked some legal recourse.

The amendment deals with powers given under subsection 1 of an amendment to the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, which gives the high court (in Scotland, the court of session) the power "to grant an injunction against a service provider, requiring it to prevent access to online locations specified in the order of the court for the prevention of online copyright infringement".

The BPI has lobbied strongly for such powers, on the basis that a growing number of sites offer "cyberlocker" facilities which allow people to swap files without their being publicly visible. The Liberal Democrat amendment was seen as agreeing with that stance – but other groups

said that it was extreme because it would be impossible to prove what content is stored on cyberlockers without inspecting their contents, which would break their own agreements with users.

At present, the bill obliges internet service providers to pay the costs of copyright owners who apply for successful blocking of sites "unless there were exceptional circumstances justifying the service provider's failure to prevent access despite notification".

The suggested amendment says that where a service provider has blocked access to an online location, "any person aggrieved may apply to the court on notice to the copyright owner and service provider to require the service provider to remove or vary the nature of the block" and that if a block is rescinded, the courts "may also on request make an order if it sees fit requiring the copyright owner to reimburse any loss or damages, including costs and legal fees, incurred by the applicant ... or by the service provider".

But Jim Killock, head of the Open Rights Group, said that while the change was "some improvement", the flaw was that the changes have not been properly debated.

"The bill is now out of line with Liberal Democrat policy, which is against web blocking in this manner following a motion that was passed at their conference at the weekend," Killock said.

"The problem is that this could now go to the Commons, and because of the budget it could be pushed through to a second reading which will mean it gets debated for a total of an hour." That would only leave time for deletions, but not amendments, in the bill. Once the election is called, the bill would then go into a "wash-up" in which legislation is passed without any debate in order to get it onto the statute books.

Killock said that "it's now too late to do anything about this bill except get rid of it. We are calling on people to complain vociferously about it because the disconnection policies in it are still flawed."

- [Piracy](#)
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[Charles Arthur](#)

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## Would your constituency get superfast broadband under the Tories?

Rural voters likely to lose out under new Tory proposals - find out how your constituency would do

- [Get the data](#)

Interesting piece by [Charles Arthur](#) today takes a [forensic look at the Tory proposals](#) to fund high-speed broadband unveiled last week.

The analysis shows that the rural constituencies which comprise the Conservatives core vote would be last to get it – if they ever did, according to a new independent analysis published today. The plans unveiled last week would mean that urban constituencies, which form the core Labour vote, would be the first to get superfast broadband, while some rural constituencies might never see it, according to [Point Topic](#), a research company specialising in national broadband usage and adoption.

Here's the raw info from Point Topic. Can you do anything with the data?

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## World government data

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## Data summary

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## **'Luddite or nerd? I think I'm a nerdite'**

The newsreader has travelled the world with his MacBook Air

**What is your favourite piece of technology and how has it improved your life?**

My favourite piece of technology is a MacBook Air. As a journalist, to have access to a full-sized keyboard, full-sized screen, absolutely everything you want except a CD/DVD drive, which you can take along in your pocket and plug in if you need to – it's changed my life. I've had it in Haiti, I've had it in Iran, I've had it all over the world, and it's the best thing I've ever bought.

**When was the last time you used it and what for?**

I used it yesterday travelling on a train, to write a blog.

**What additional features would you add to it if you could?**

God, it has absolutely everything I could ever want, though I suppose it could be even thinner and even lighter.

**Do you think it will be obsolete in 10 years?**

I imagine so, but as I enjoy it now, I can't imagine it will be, but then I couldn't imagine that the portable typewriter would be.

**What always frustrates you about technology in general?**

My failure to understand it.

**Is there any particular piece of technology that you've owned and hated?**

God yes, I mean, try any PC on me...

**If you had one tip to give about getting the best out of new technology, what would it be?**

Spend rather than save, and get the right piece of kit from the outset.

**Are you a luddite or a nerd?**

I think I'm a nerdite.

**What's the most expensive piece of technology you've owned?**

I suppose the MacBook Air, but, no, I suppose my original desktop Mac was – they were pretty expensive.

**Do you still buy physical media, such as CDs and DVDs, or do you download? What was your last purchase?**

I download. Although just occasionally there are things that you can't get online, particularly classical music. My last purchase was a choral work by Rossini, and the particular piece I wanted – the particular rendition of the piece – wasn't online.

### **Robot butlers – a good idea or not?**

I wouldn't want a butler, so why I'd want a robot butler foxes me.

### **What piece of technology would you most like to own?**

It used to be an iPhone but now that Vodafone has just made them available, I do own one.

- *Newsreader Jon Snow's blog is at <http://blogs.channel4.com/snowblog/>*

- [Gadgets](#)

- [Jon Snow](#)

[Stuart O'Connor](#)

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## Game review: Yakuza 3

PS3; £39.99; cert 18+; Sega

One surprising feature of the year so far has been the number of exclusive games for Sony's PlayStation 3 – and here is another which, while far from mainstream, will certainly please those who love the offbeat charms the Japanese always bring to gaming.

Yakuza 3 is best described as the Japanese answer to Grand Theft Auto, except with an impeccable brawling engine, drawn heavily from the great Japanese beat-em-up tradition, in place of the cars and guns. You play Kazuma Kiryu, legendary ex-Fourth Chairman of the Tojo Clan, now retired to the bucolic surroundings of Okinawa, where he runs an orphanage. You can tell he's still a Yakuza, though, thanks to the trendy shirt and facial hair, plus the tattoo covering his back.

Early indications aren't great, as Yakuza 3 proceeds at a glacial pace, with countless cut-scenes, conversations to trawl through (in subtitled Japanese, thankfully, rather than incongruously dubbed into American) and trivial tasks that involve looking after kids. But graphically, it is fantastic, and the gloriously immersive and detailed Tokyo and small-town Okinawa neighbourhoods evoke memories of Yu Suzuki's overblown but groundbreaking Shenmue.

Indeed, Yakuza 3 has been hailed by Sega fanboys as the nearest thing to Shenmue 3, and its labyrinthine but gripping storyline – the Yakuza are circling around Kiryu-san's orphanage due to a putative deal to build an American air base and resort in the vicinity, and Kazuma, after being reluctantly dragged into the local Yakuza family, returns to Tokyo when full-blown internecine war breaks out – augmented with countless agreeably weird side-missions, and the ability to shop, hang out in bars and so on does indeed make it worthy of Shenmue comparisons.

Gameplay-wise, it's fairly old-fashioned, although the brawling engine is nice and responsive. You get points to upgrade Kazuma's abilities when you defeat bosses (who literally are Yakuza bosses), and if you come across "revelations" – strange goings-on that you photograph with your mobile and blog about – you get extra fighting abilities. Mini-games, including the obligatory gambling games and even a full Tiger Woods-style golf engine, are rife, as are hidden collectibles. Even the core game is lengthy, and completists should be able to keep themselves occupied for weeks or even months.

Yakuza 3 won't be to everyone's taste, but if the idea of immersing yourself in a meticulous and, more often than not, pretty bonkers reconstruction of the world of the Yakuza appeals, you'll love it. If you played Shenmue, it will probably elicit a few tears of nostalgia. And maybe ponder the irony of Sega providing Sony with an exclusive game that will become a cult classic, which has roots in the Dreamcast era when Sega and Sony were sworn enemies.

Rating: 4/5

- [Games](#)
- [PlayStation](#)
- [Sony](#)

[Steve Boxer](#)

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## MySpace bosses battle to oust Facebook from social networking top spot

New design and better technology will be used to encourage users to return to the site

'MySpace is not dead,' says an emphatic Jason Hirschhorn, smiling and leaning back in his chair at News Corporation's digital headquarters in Beverly Hills, California. Given the battering that the site has taken over the past couple of years – especially during its rival Facebook's rapid ascent – his optimism may seem surprising. But then again, as the New Yorker is one of two men charged with breathing life back into the world's second most popular social network, it isn't unexpected.

We're sitting in the unassuming office that Hirschhorn – a former head of MTV's digital operations – shares with his quieter counterpart, Mike Jones. Everything about their set-up, as MySpace's newly elected co-presidents, screams partnership. They sit at their desks face-to-face, divide up their duties, use similar language. And together they have spent months plotting how to reverse the site's fortunes and make it relevant again.

"We have a huge audience, which is fantastic – there are over 100 million users on MySpace," says Jones, a serial entrepreneur and a former vice president at AOL, who became the company's chief operating officer last spring. "But it's at a precipice where it needs to jump to the next level of evolution."

### Lost business

Put lightly, that is an understatement. It has been a tumultuous couple of years for the website that took the world by surprise when Rupert Murdoch bought its parent company for \$580m [then £332m] in 2005. Once an online hotspot attracting musicians and movie stars, the site almost capsized in Facebook's wake and, as a result, it has drifted off the radar for millions of people.

While the site is still sizeable it has lost users, business and momentum – extremely dangerous territory for anyone in the fickle internet business. Today, News Corp's prime digital brand is perilously close to becoming an online also-ran – if it isn't already. And with Murdoch's stated intention to go against the internet consensus and put his web operations behind a paywall, MySpace is in an exposed position.

The company has undergone a rapid turnaround at the top in an attempt to cure its malaise. Less than a year ago its co-founder Chris DeWolfe was pushed aside as chief executive and replaced by Owen Van Natta, a former Facebooker. With Hirschhorn and Jones brought in as his lieutenants, Van Natta oversaw the restructuring of the company and cut hundreds of jobs – before he was also moved along in a coup last month that was engineered by Murdoch's digital chief, Jon Miller.

While changing your chief executive is a common business tactic, any company that does it twice in a year faces accusations of panic. But Jones and Hirschhorn insist that not only are things still under control, but that they have a plan to nurse MySpace back to prime health over the coming months.

### **Fresh partnerships**

What does that entail? New designs will help make the site cleaner and more usable, though they plan to keep much of the idiosyncratic feel. Better technologies will make it easier to share what you are doing online with other people, while fresh partnerships will keep MySpace connected to the rest of the web. There will be more games and applications, and dropping extraneous products such as horoscopes will give more space to the site's traditional diet of movies, music and people. And in the long run, they say, more effort will go into understanding what people are looking for before they even start – it is this sense of "discovery" that they believe will help the site start growing again.

It's not just important for the company that these changes succeed: it is vital for MySpace's survival. The site once boasted user numbers of more than 120 million, and revenues (which have fallen short of targets for several years) are down to around \$500m annually.

The mistakes of the past have clearly taken their toll. Jones talks of too much time spent "paying off tactical debt". Hirschhorn speaks more plainly: when the site was in the spotlight, he suggests, it spent a great deal of effort coping with sudden growth – but then when things slowed down, it was too concerned with looking at its competitors and not enough with making progress.

"Success covers up a lot of operational issues, a lot of issues around creativity and product," he says. "And when the traffic started to plateau, there was a morale issue that centred around not being the stars any more." But how many second acts have there been for major online brands? Yahoo, which has tried reinventing itself many times, appears to be emitting the longest death rattle in history. Jones's former employer,

AOL, is hoping for its own recovery, but only after a decade of limping along. Many suggest that AOL's boss, Tim Armstrong, is merely managing an inevitable decline.

Hirschhorn points to other companies that have come back from the brink – and has studied how they managed to do it. "Focus is everything," he says. "When I look at Apple, when I look at Nintendo – when I look at the great companies that have turned themselves around and re-defined themselves – it's because they have focused on a specific market, a specific set of things and partnered for the rest."

He draws on another example from his own experience: the TV channel VH1. "When I was working there it was very music-focused, very white rock-focused," he says. "Under Christina Norman, who runs Oprah's channel now, they reinvented themselves around pop culture. You can like it or not like it, but that's unique." These are fine examples, but none of them happened online, where tastes change rapidly and second-place brands are often crushed under the steamrolling desire for the next big thing.

And even if the site were to get back ahead of its rivals, it is not just its users that MySpace's bosses have to deal with. The site's fiercest critics think that its long-term chances of survival are slim because its ultimate boss, Murdoch, fails to understand what is taking place.

Shortly after Van Natta's shock departure, Michael Wolff – the controversy-loving journalist who wrote the definitive biography of Murdoch – told me that the mogul's interference had left all of his digital operations paralysed.

"Rupert, the guy who knows nothing about this whatsoever – is suddenly commandeering this whole thing," he said. "It's got everybody completely freaked out. Rupert is saying 'what's going on with MySpace, what's happening, why isn't this working?' – and it's impossible to explain to him that it's not working because it's over, because this is the way the technology business goes – once it's past, it's really past. There is almost no way to get that back."

In fact, MySpace's relationship with News Corp has always been tricky. After the initial acquisition, DeWolfe was careful not to cede too much control to his corporate parents – a policy that insiders say left the site unable to capitalise properly on the vast repository of TV, films and other content under News Corp's umbrella.

In recent months, however, the organisation has started to pull together a little more – and the duo reckon that could work in their

favour. "We know they have a really big, global voice and when we need to go out and bang the drum ... then we will absolutely be able to go to News Corp and ask for that favour," says Jones.

"It's nothing that's going to happen tomorrow. We're doing a lot of tests, researching a lot of things and over the next few months we'll be releasing some fundamental changes. When we feel good about them we'll go out and beat that drum and bring the noise back to MySpace."

But even if it manages to use the corporation's resources to push itself back into the spotlight, these are undeniably crucial moments for MySpace. While most sites would kill for 100 million users, growth is the most important thing online. Once a brand is on the slide, it's nearly impossible to come back – and the internet's intensive care ward is stuffed with social websites such as Friendster and FriendsReunited.

Yet they go on, relishing the chance to perform an unparalleled act of internet resuscitation. "I love challenges, and it felt like a really big challenge," says Jones, recalling when he was first offered the job. "It was a big system, a tonne of audience, it had revenue pressures, it was getting a tonne of press coverage, there's a lot of people, it's international ... it was an important thing not to write off and not to ignore."

For those at the top, MySpace may be too big to disregard – but the trick will be to get the rest of the world to take notice again.

- [Social networking](#)
- [MySpace](#)
- [Rupert Murdoch](#)
- [News Corporation](#)
- [Facebook](#)

[Bobbie Johnson](#)

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## Sex.com goes under the hammer

The internet's most valuable domain name, sex.com, is back on the auction block – and bidding starts at \$1m

If you've got \$1m for a starting bid, and many millions more available, you could next week be the proud owner of the internet's most fought-over domain name: sex.com.

The site's ownership goes up for auction next week by DOM Partners LLC, a New Jersey lender that backed a 2006 purchase of the domain name for up to \$14m but which is now foreclosing on the loan.

The auction is scheduled for 18 March at the New York law firm Windels Marx Lane & Mittendorf LLP, according to legal notices. And there is good reason for the site to attract bidders: at one point, it was making at least \$15,000 a day, according to a 2008 book, *The Sex.com Chronicles* by Charles Carreon.

In the late 1990s, internet domains used to change hands for stunning amounts: though sex.com sets the price record, others including fund.com (\$10m), porn.com (\$9.5m), business.com (\$7.5m) and diamonds.com (\$7.5m) proved how much value some investors saw in the visitor-attracting power of a simple, easily remembered name.

But in many cases those domains were sold before the rise of Google, whose search engine dominates internet navigation, and which assesses sites not by their names but by their reputations, as measured by the number of other sites that link to them. A search for "sex" on Google shows sex.com as the fourth result; the top result is a site first registered in 2000.

The auction is yet another twist in the history of sex.com, which has seen bizarre shenanigans between would-be rival owners including Mexican jails, international pursuits and accusations of hacking which Kieren McCarthy, the author of another book about the struggle for sex.com's ownership, has called "a Trojan war for the digital age".

That war began in October 1995, when Gary Kremen, who 18 months earlier had become the first person to register sex.com, noticed that he was no longer listed as its owner. An 11-year battle, sometimes legal, followed with Stephen Michael Cohen, who also claimed to be the owner, disputing Kremen's ownership. It was finally settled in January 2006, when Kremen, having been declared the owner, sold the site to Escom LLC.

But Escom made the purchase with a loan from DOM Partners – and that has been in default for more than a year. "The loan was in default and DOM partners is foreclosing pursuant to its right under the security agreement," DOM's attorney, Scott Matthews, said. Attempts to reach Escom and sex.com for comment were not immediately successful.

But Richard Maltz, an auctioneer at Maltz Auctions who is running the sale, said on Monday there was considerable interest in it. "We don't know who's serious and who's not, but prospective bidders need a \$1m certified cheque. It should be interesting."

Maltz said his firm was arranging for potential buyers to also be able to bid online. It is not known whether Stephen Cohen will be among the bidders.

Kremen, meanwhile, has been successful away from sex.com, having set up match.com, the dating website, and is chief executive of Grant Media.

- [Internet](#)  
[Charles Arthur](#)

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## 'Most online readers aren't loyal'

Large majority say they would go elsewhere if their favourite site introduced paywall, according to Pew report

Only 35% of online news consumers have a favourite site, with most consumers using multiple sites, a Pew study has found.

While 71% of internet users get their news online – a number that has held relatively steady in recent years according to the report – the majority (65%) aren't loyal to a single site.

According to data from an Outsell study, most people even don't read articles as 44% of visitors to Google News are just scanning headlines and never click on articles themselves.

As news organisations discuss charging for content using full subscriptions and pay-per-article fees, these figures heavily suggest that it remains as unclear as ever how to monetise the growing audience.

The findings of the survey reassert what Walter Lippmann wrote about the reader in his book *Public Opinion*: "He will pay a nominal price when it suits him, will stop paying whenever it suits him, will turn to another paper when that suits him. Somebody has said quite aptly that the newspaper editor has to be re-elected every day."

What Lippmann wrote in 1922 is obviously still valid today. Even among loyal news consumers, 82% of those with a favourite site said they would find somewhere else to get the news if there was a paywall, and only 19% said they are willing to pay for news online.

The conclusion of the report therefore is clear: "Thus, if the news industry is going to make headway with paywalls, they are going to have to break through what for now appears to be continuing reluctance, even among its most avid consumers."

However, the perception of advertising is slowly changing.

Some 81% of online news users say they do not mind online advertising because it allows content to be free. However, only 21% of all online news users say they click on online ads at least sometimes; 77% say they ignore the ads, of which 42% "never" click on them and 35% "hardly ever" do so.

Lippmann dealt with that problem when saying: "Nobody thinks for a moment that he ought to pay for his newspaper. He expects the fountains of truth to bubble, but he enters into no contract, legal or moral, involving any risk, cost or trouble to himself."

While the findings of the study are troubling, the fact that Lippmann faced the same type of problem back in 1922 might offer hope.

- [Paywalls](#)
- [Digital media](#)
- [Charging for content](#)
- [Newspapers](#)

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## Microsoft loses appeal in patent case

Suffering under an injunction against versions of Word that deal with particular forms of XML, Microsoft sallies forth once more against i4i

Remember Microsoft, and the case taken out by i4i alleging that it held particular patents relating to XML, and that later versions of Word infringed it - and that Microsoft should therefore be enjoined against selling it?

Yes, that case, which got its first result last August. (And you'll recall our interview with the chief executive of i4i.)

At that time, both sides were waiting for the outcome of an appeal lodged by Microsoft - which, being big, would expect to prevail.

And now, the result:

"a panel for the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit issued a revised opinion in i4i v. Microsoft which affirms the August 11, 2009 Final Judgment by The Honorable Judge Leonard Davis that ruled in favor of i4i and found that Microsoft had wilfully infringed i4i's U.S. Patent No. 5,787,449."

Oh dear, Microsoft, that has to hurt.

"Loudon Owen, Chairman of i4i, says, "The appeals court has again upheld the lower court's decision in its entirety. In addition, it issued a more detailed analysis in concerning the finding of willfulness in this case. The determination that Microsoft willfully infringed i4i's patent stands.""

"Michel Vulpe, founder of i4i and co-inventor, says, "i4i is especially pleased with the court's continued decision to uphold the injunction, an important step in protecting the property rights of inventors. i4i continues to offer custom XML solutions.""

The Court of Appeals is still considering a petition by Microsoft for en banc review (which, to save you the click, is granted pretty rarely - about 94 cases get it per year).

Which may mean that that's that for the XML-infringing version of Word, which is the 2003 version - though of course Microsoft is perfectly able to sell other versions that don't.

As Jack commented way back when the first case came up:

"anyone who has read a chunk of i4i's US Patent No 5,787,449 might well have doubts about the competence of the US Patent Office in granting it, and it seems even more unlikely that the average judge or juror in East Texas is competent to adjudicate on it. Perhaps someone should tell POTUS that the US software patent system is broken.

"Having said that, you have to wonder whether Microsoft has a rational legal strategy. Given its track record for losing lawsuits, and its presumed familiarity with the East Texas courts, you'd have thought it would either have found some way to move the case or change its Word code so that it couldn't be seen to infringe i4i's patent. If the latter is impossible, of course, then the XML open standard could be in trouble, too."

i4i has subsequently indicated that it's not going after the XML open standard.

- [Microsoft](#)
- [Intellectual property](#)
- [Software](#)

[Charles Arthur](#)

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## **Chatroulette: 71% men, 15% women and 14% perverts**

Film-maker spends time on internet chat service Chatroulette – all in the name of research, of course

Heard and read about Chatroulette, but a bit frightened to check it out yourself? Now you can find out about the website that allows you to video chat with strangers all over the world thanks to New York film-maker Casey Neistat.

After being introduced to it by a friend, Neistat logs on to Chatroulette. He explains what it means to get "nexted", and explores different aspects of the phenomenon.

The film-maker says that of the 90 people he clicked through at 4pm New York time on a Thursday he found 71% men, 15% women and 14% perverts, while 83% were fairly young and 17% older people. With the help of a female friend he also found out that people on Chatroulette are much more likely to talk to a woman. While 95% "nexted" Neistadt, his friend Genevieve was clicked away by only 5%.

Neistat is best known for the viral video he made with his brother in 2003 about the iPod's irreplaceable battery called The iPod's Dirty Secret. This summer, HBO will air an eight-episodes series created by Neistat, his brother Van and Tom Scott. It is called The Neistat Brothers and features short stories about the brothers' lives.

- Social networking
- Digital media
- Internet
- Online dating

Mercedes Bunz

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## **Robin Dunbar: we can only ever have 150 friends at most...**

Evolutionary anthropologist Robin Dunbar tells Aleks Krotoski why even Facebook cannot expand our true social circle: our brains just aren't big enough to cope

Not many people have a number named after them, but Robin Dunbar lays claim to the Dunbar Number. Confusingly, no precise value has been attached to this figure, but a commonly cited approximation is 150 – and this is the number of people with whom we can maintain a meaningful relationship, whether in a hunter-gatherer society or on Facebook.

The director of the Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology at Oxford University is also the author of *How Many Friends Does One Person Need?* (Faber). It's no surprise he's an engaging companion.

### **What is evolutionary anthropology?**

Evolutionary anthropology is the generic study of how we came to be modern humans – how our bodies came to be the shape they are, how our minds came to be the way they are.

### **So how much of our social behaviour is rooted in our biology?**

All of it! [But] by that you must be clear that you don't mean *genetically* rooted – so that we have no choice about the way we behave, we're programmed in the way that an amoeba is.

If you look at *any* bird or mammal, never mind things as smart as primates, never mind things as doubly smart as humans... any bird or mammal has its biological inheritance, as it were, which gives the rules of how to play the game of life. But how those rules get played out on a day-to-day basis depends on how the animal assesses the particular circumstances – it has a lot of flexibility in how it should behave, it just has some guidelines provided by evolution, and some constraints. If you don't have wings, you can't fly... [But there's still] lots of scope for social, environmental, demographic circumstances... and grim economics.

### **What does your work tell us about the way we interact socially?**

The way in which our social world is constructed is part and parcel of our biological inheritance. Together with apes and monkeys, we're members of the primate family – and within the primates there is a general relationship between the size of the brain and the size of the

social group. We fit in a pattern. There are social circles beyond it and layers within – but there is a natural grouping of 150.

This is the number of people you can have a relationship with involving trust and obligation – there's some personal history, not just names and faces.

**And this is the Dunbar number! How did you come up with this concept?**

I was working on the arcane question of why primates spend so much time grooming one another, and I tested another hypothesis – which says the reason why primates have big brains is because they live in complex social worlds. Because grooming is social, all these things ought to map together, so I started plotting brain size and group size and grooming time against one another. You get a nice set of relationships.

It was about 3am, and I thought, hmm, what happens if you plug humans into this? And you get this number of 150. This looked implausibly small, given that we all live in cities now, but it turned out that this was the size of a typical community in hunter-gatherer societies. And the average village size in the Domesday Book is 150 [people].

It's the same when we have much better data – in the 18th century, for example, thanks to parish registers. County by county, the average size of a village is again 150. Except in Kent, where it was 100. I've no idea why.

**Has this number evolved at all?**

The Dunbar number probably dates back to the appearance of anatomically modern humans 250,000 years ago. If you go back in time, by estimating brain size, you can see community size declining steadily.

**Why *did* we evolve as a social species?**

Simply, it's the key evolutionary strategy of primates. Group living and explicitly communal solutions to the problem of survival out there on the plains or in the forests... that's a primate adaptation, and they evolved that very early on.

Most species of birds and animals aren't as intensely social. Sociality for most species hovers around pair-bonds, that's as complicated as it gets. The species with big brains are the ones who mate monogamously... The lesson is that there is something computationally very demanding about maintaining close relationships over a very long period of time – as we all know!

**How can we grow the Dunbar number?**

We're caught in a bind: community sizes were designed for hunter-gatherer-type societies where people weren't living on top of one another. Your 150 were scattered over a wide area, but everybody shared the same 150. This made for a very densely interconnected community, and this means the community polices itself. You don't need lawyers and policemen. If you step out of line, granny will wag her finger at you.

Our problem now is the sheer density of folk – our networks aren't compact. You have clumps of friends scattered around the world who don't know one another: now you don't have an interwoven network. It leads to a less well integrated society. How to re-create that old sense of community in these new circumstances? That's an engineering problem. How do we work around it?

The alternative solution, of course, is that we could evolve bigger brains. But they'd have to be *much* bigger, and it takes a long time.

### **What about the role of the web in this?**

Can we manage to have meaningful relationships with more than just the old numbers? Yes, I can find out what you had for breakfast from your tweet, but can I really get to know you better? These digital developments help us keep in touch, when in the past a relationship might just have died; but in the end, we actually have to get together to make a relationship work.

In the end, we rely heavily on touch and we still haven't figured out how to do virtual touch. Maybe once we can do that we will have cracked a big nut.

Words are slippery, a touch is worth a 1,000 words *any day*.

[Aleks Krotoski](#)

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## When the dotcom bubble burst the ideas didn't just float away

The internet boom and bust saw companies come and go, but the seeds of great website businesses were sown, and many of the entrepreneurs are still working

The streets of Silicon Valley are littered with survivors of the dotcom boom and bust – but while many retain vivid memories of the crash, few seem permanently scarred by the experience.

Among the most notorious failures was [pets.com](#), an online pet shop that promised to deliver food and supplies across America at competitive prices. Founded in August 1998 and backed with tens of millions from investors including Amazon, the brand blew up quickly, with a popular ad campaign and a January 2000 Super Bowl spot that cost more than \$1m (£660,000).

The company went public with an \$83m stock offering a month later – weeks before the crash. Just nine months on, the company had collapsed and the truth about its business became clear: it had spent vast amounts on advertising while selling most of its products at a significant loss.

Founder Julie Wainwright remains unapologetic for the very public burnout, suggesting that "it was a great company, but the timing wasn't". She went on to run an online photo service and worked in venture capital, before starting women's health website [SmartNow](#) two years ago. Even the fact that her husband filed for divorce just days after [pets.com](#) went under seems to have been part of the process. "I had two major life crises in the same week, one public and one private, that sent me on a journey of self-discovery and healing I couldn't have anticipated," she told the *New York Times* in 2008.

Wainwright's story is one repeated by veterans all over the internet industry: their companies may have collapsed during the bust, but that failure is worn as a badge of honour.

In fact, despite the estimated \$5tn lost when the internet bubble collapsed, it is the websites themselves that have fallen by the wayside – rather than the people behind them. A prime example is the web radio service [broadcast.com](#), which was sold to Yahoo for \$5.7bn in 1999 but no longer exists as a website in its own right.

While [broadcast.com](#) is dead, former chief executive Mark Cuban has gone on to become more famous than ever before, as the outspoken

billionaire owner of the Dallas Mavericks basketball team and Magnolia Pictures, distributor of films such as Food, Inc.

"I was fortunate enough to be part of a great company that got whisked away in the frenzy. I was also fortunate enough to recognise the difference between a company and a stock," he says. "What was unfortunate was that with the bursting of the bubble came Yahoo basically killing off a company that was doing everything that YouTube does today but years earlier. But they paid me for the right to do whatever they wanted with it."

Other sites that struggled through the bust have fallen into disrepair, obscurity or simply shut down. GeoCities, an early precursor to social networking sites, was bought by Yahoo for \$3.5bn in 1999. It was left to languish after the crash and finally put down last year. Co-founder David Bohnett, who now runs his own foundation, says that although much of the enthusiasm died after the bust, many of the ideas developed have gone on to have a massive impact on millions of people. "GeoCities paved the way for the success of today's social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace," he says. "The internet has continued to evolve in wonderful ways in the last 10 years."

Not every site from the boom has withered, however. One of the biggest success stories, Amazon, bullied its way through the crash – despite not posting its first profit until 2002. Boss Jeff Bezos bet everything on the idea that heavy, long-term investment would corner the online retail market, even if it meant losses in the short term, and it paid off. He is now ranked 43rd richest man on the planet, with a net worth of \$12.3bn.

While many entrepreneurs saw their paper fortunes dwindle with the crash, some of the sharpest criticism was aimed at the bankers and investors who had helped fuel the dotcom rollercoaster with soaring valuations.

They too, by and large, recovered quickly from the after-effects of the crash. Mary Meeker, an analyst with Morgan Stanley, was famed for her predictions on internet stocks and crowned in 1998 as the "queen of the net" by Barron's magazine. Despite the crash, she was an important player in a boardroom coup several years ago and continues to command respect as a managing director of the company's technology group.

Even one of the villains of the era, equities analyst Henry Blodget, has undergone something of a rehabilitation. Charged with fraud when it

emerged that he had advised investors to buy shares in companies that he privately rubbished, Blodget eventually settled without admitting culpability for a total of \$4m in fines and other payments. Barred from ever working in the securities industry again, he returned to his previous career as a journalist and now runs a popular industry news blog, [Business Insider](#).

Cuban says that despite the tumult caused, few lessons have been learned in the United States. "Sad thing is that nothing has changed," he says. "In 2000 it was the internet stocks. A couple of years ago it was real estate and mortgages. In five years it will be something else. We live for bubbles in this country. The internet bubble was just one example of the many that have happened. It's shocking that so few seem to learn so little from history that they repeat it over and over."

- [Technology sector](#)
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## Has Twitter reached its peak?

Micro-blogging service Twitter's user growth has almost levelled off since September 2009, according to a study

Twitter's growth seems to have lost its momentum, according to a new study.

Growth in the micro-blogging service's number of users peaked at nearly 20% last April, but had dropped down to 0.15% in December 2009, says a study by Barracuda Networks.

Recent web analytics had already suggested that Twitter had reached its peak, as Twitter.com recorded a traffic high in July 2009 and has never reached that level since. According to Compete, Twitter reached 23.5 million users in August 2009 and stayed put. However, as Twitter client applications have grown and have become a bigger percentage of Twitter's user base, the numbers didn't necessarily reflect the actual situation of the micro-blogging service. By using the growth in Twitter users, instead of the site's traffic, the Barracuda study now puts things into perspective.

Strong growth in user numbers of 21.17% in April dropped to 10.95% in July and to 0.82% in September, and has ever been under 1% since – 0.58% in October, 0.34 in November and finally 0.15 in December. The accounts deleted by month also was growing, from 3.36% in April to 12.03% in October from which they peaked off to 8.48% and 8.14% percent in November and December.

To get these figures, Barracuda analysed more than 19 million Twitter accounts for frequency and content of tweets, user-to-user interactions, and each account's overall activity level. "We have been monitoring Twitter for more than one and a half years and keep track of the public timeline, and any new account of the public timeline," says lead researcher Nidhi Shah.

Barracuda's chief research officer, Paul Judge, explains the stagnation of Twitter with the end of "The Red Carpet Era". Twitter shows "a very concentrated growth spurt during the early part of 2009 – a period that we define as the 'Twitter Red Carpet Era'. Twitter users came online to follow their favorite celebrities. The most famous people have already joined Twitter, so I don't think they'll see another growth spurt like that," says Judge. From November 2008 to April 2009, several big celebrities, including Ashton Kutcher, Oprah Winfrey and John Mayer, joined Twitter.

In comparison, the number of Facebook users has been rising continuously. According to Facebook, today 50% of the 400 million active users log on to Facebook in any given day, with more than 35 million users updating their status and more than 60 million status updates posted each day.

Another Twitter study published by US web analytics company RJMetrics last month seems to confirm Barracuda's report. It says that Twitter has 75 million users, an estimation that Barracuda roughly agrees upon, with a large percentage of accounts being inactive.

According to RJMetrics' data, about 80% of all Twitter users have tweeted fewer than 10 times, about 40% of accounts have never sent a single tweet, and 25% of accounts have no followers.

RJMetrics concludes that "the past six months have shown steady decline in the number of new account registrations", but the number of new users a month is currently at about 6.2 million. Their report doesn't say anything on the number of deleted accounts.

Twitter, which has not yet commented on the reports, recently announced that it had hit 50 million tweets a day. According to Barracuda's report, users are becoming more active on Twitter, with the most active users being those with about 1,000 followers.

According to internal documents leaked to TechCrunch, the company's forecast that it would go "from 25 million users at the end of 2009 to 1 billion in 2013".

Until now, Twitter itself has not released precise figures on its growth. Recently, Twitter co-founder Biz Stone posted an email newsletter saying that it had recorded 1,500% growth in the number of registered users but did not specify the timespan.

The reports certainly will prompt several questions. Has Twitter reached its peak? Is Twitter a micro-blogging service where only marketing people tweet to each other? Was it overhyped? How relevant is it anyway?

One thing is certain, the days of micro-blogging might not look as rosy as they did last spring, but they are far from over.

Google is giving tweets a visibility they never had before. After the launch of Google's real-time search in December, Twitter's traffic rose 9% from December 2009 to January 2010, according to ComScore.

Twitter's number of users may not have grown, but with the Google deal it became more important than ever.

- [Social networking](#)
- [Digital media](#)
- [Twitter](#)

[Mercedes Bunz](#)

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## Britain fends off flood of cyber-attacks

Government and business computers regularly targeted by hackers, says security minister

Foreign states and terrorist groups are regularly launching cyber-attacks on the UK's computer systems with the potential to cause widespread damage, according to the government's security tsar.

Lord West of Spithead, who is parliamentary under-secretary for security and counter-terrorism, told the *Observer* that the UK was under daily cyber attack, often from agencies working on behalf of foreign governments.

He said there had been "300 significant attacks" on the government's core computer networks in the last year and warned of chaotic scenes if one successfully targeted infrastructure such as the UK's communications systems.

The security service, MI5, has warned that tackling espionage conducted by Chinese and Russian agents is taking up an increasing amount of its time.

West declined to identify the states carrying out the cyber-attacks on UK computer systems, but it is clear that he shares the service's fears that some states are using communications systems and computer networks to seek confidential information held by government agencies and private companies in the UK.

"There is no doubt some state actors have sucked out huge amounts of intellectual copyright, designs to whole aero engines, things that have taken years and years of development," West said.

"The moment you mention a particular state, they will deny it," West added. "The problem with cyberspace is that attribution is extremely difficult. It's almost impossible to do it in terms of evidence that would be necessary in a court of law."

However, he said the UK government had sufficient intelligence to be confident that it knew who the main perpetrators were. Russia has been widely blamed for launching debilitating cyber-attacks on Estonia and Georgia. West said such actions prompted new questions.

"If I went and bombed a power station in France, that would be an act of war," he said. "If I went on to the net and took out a power station, is that an act of war? One could argue that it was."

And he warned that there might come a time when the UK would feel compelled to retaliate. "If some state sponsor keeps trying to get into your systems, probably for industrial espionage, are you going to go back into their system and bugger it up? We're all capable of doing these things. At the moment we wouldn't do that, but maybe this is where we need to have discussions."

He suggested that the UK needed to be prepared to tackle a spectrum of threats in cyberspace, including those posed by criminal gangs and terrorists. "I'm very worried they [terrorists] may start becoming cuter and try to use our connectivity to have a go at our critical infrastructure, things [that control] our services, our food [distribution] and water supply," he said. Terrorists were currently "not brilliant" at attempting this sort of attack on infrastructure, he added, but they would learn fast and "we've got to be ahead of them".

As an example of the potential effects, he talked about what would happen if time signals from global positioning system satellites were disabled. "Not a single cash machine would work, the Docklands Light Railway wouldn't work, you wouldn't be able to berth oil tankers, great chunks of our transport infrastructure would stop," West said.

He drew comparisons with ice storms in the Canadian capital, Ottawa, several years ago. "All the power went down; there were riots with people smashing into stores," he said.

The government is so concerned at the evolving threats in cyberspace that this month it launched the Office of Cyber Security, which draws on expertise from organisations such as GCHQ, the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office and the Serious and Organised Crime Agency.

The OCS is engaged in planning exercises looking at warfare in 2015 and 2040. Another part of its remit will be tackling online fraud. West described the rise of "malicious" computer code as "exponential" and "mindboggling". "The more you realise the malicious elements that are out there trying things, the more horrifying it becomes," he said.

Last week Spanish investigators arrested three alleged ringleaders of the so-called "Mariposa" botnet, which had infected and controlled up to 12.7m PCs. West acknowledged that the 2012 Olympics would be a target for cyber-attacks. "People will be trying to get into the Olympics [ticketing] site to see what they can do," he said.

His comments come days after the director of the FBI, Robert Mueller, warned that militant groups, foreign states and criminal organisations posed a growing threat to US security as they targeted government and

private computer networks. "Apart from the terrorist threat, nation states may use the internet as a means of attack," Mueller said. "They seek our technology, our intelligence, our intellectual property, even our military weapons and strategies."

- [Data and computer security](#)
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[Jamie Doward](#)

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## UK launch of 3D TVs nears

Korean company Samsung kicks off the industry-wide push by launching a 3D range that will be in British shops by the end of the month

The friendly green monster Shrek, the blue-skinned Na'vi of the planet Pandora and Wayne Rooney's shots on goal will shortly take on a new, three-dimensional glory.

Spurred on by the success of the Hollywood fantasy blockbuster Avatar, the world's top electronics companies believe they can make 3D television sets the norm for consumers in the US and Europe within three years.

The Korean company Samsung kicks off the industry-wide push – and battle for brand supremacy – by launching a 3D range that will be in British shops by the end of the month.

Billed as the world's first high definition, three-dimensional LED televisions, Samsung's range will be serenaded by the Black Eyed Peas at a glitzy global marketing debut in New York tomorrow.

At a press conference today, Samsung said its televisions and Blu-ray devices will come with a starter pack of two pairs of 3D glasses and a Blu-ray version of Monsters vs Aliens under a tie-up with the movie studio DreamWorks Animation.

"It's quite simply the entertainment revolution of our time," said DreamWorks' chief executive, Jeffrey Katzenberg. "It's as important as the introduction of sound or colour."

Keen to get in on the act, the Japanese company Panasonic will sell its first 3D television at a BestBuy electronics shop in Manhattan this week. And Sony, which expects to begin selling its sets in June, has set an ambitious target of selling 2.5m 3D televisions by March 2011 – amounting to roughly one tenth of all its global television sales.

In British shops, John Lewis's vision buyer, David Kempner, said he expected demand to be a "slowburn", with an opening price point of £2,000. "HD is still a relatively new concept and consumers are just getting used to it but 3D will be the next big thing. Given it has the support of all the major manufacturers, 3D technology has got momentum of its own but it also requires content providers to support it and there is a time lag there."

Experts say that 3D televisions are likely to enjoy mainstream uptake because the technology behind them barely costs any more than existing sets. To achieve three dimensions, manufacturers need more powerful processors but the fundamental make-up of the television changes only marginally. The only substantial extra cost is making 3D glasses.

"The add-on cost of manufacturing isn't significant," said Jim Bottoms, director of the technology consulting company Futuresource. "Set makers are starting to incorporate 3D in higher-end televisions this year. Very quickly, certainly by 2015, virtually every full-sized television will have 3D capability."

Although pricing for British shops is yet to be finalised, Sony's 3D televisions range in Japan from around £2,150 for a 40in set to double that amount for a 60in model, while Samsung is charging \$2,000 (£1,350) to \$4,000 in American stores.

Sport and films will be the early applications for 3D home entertainment. Under a deal with Sony, Sky has already begun showing certain Premier League matches in pubs on 3D televisions and this summer's World Cup could be a watershed for the technology: Sony will film 25 matches in South Africa using 3D cameras.

The opening ceremony of Vancouver's Winter Olympics was available in 3D. More than 20 movies in 3D are scheduled for release this year, including Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*, which topped Britain's cinema box office charts at the weekend.

Mainstream television programming will take longer. The BBC and ITV have expressed interest in experimenting with 3D content.

But Bottoms said everyday shows were unlikely to go 3D until technology arrives to eliminate the need for special glasses, which is thought to be up to five years away.

"We see the next three to five years as being 'event-driven' for 3D. When we get to a glass-less solution, then we'll really see 3D become more pervasive," he said.

It has taken decades even to get to this point. The first 3D film, *The Power of Love*, was made back in 1922 and dozens of movies came out in the 1950s including such gems as *Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

But a key problem was "3D fatigue" whereby viewers' eyes became tired from distinguishing the twin images needed to create depth perception.

Samsung's president of visual display products, Boo Keun Yoon, told the Guardian that 3D fatigue killed off three-dimensional filming in the 20th century but that new techniques have overcome this lingering problem by creating a more consistent image.

"We've recently had developments in how 3D films are shot," said Yoon. "I believe 2010 will be the year of the 3D television revolution. Probably by the end of this year, we'll see an explosive growth in demand."

- [Television](#)
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## Sony unveils PlayStation Move for autumn release

It's motion war, as Move faces down Natal...

So, PlayStation Move it is then. Sony has officially named its motion controller, previously known as Arc, and confirmed an autumn launch date - placing it in direct competition with Microsoft's Natal motion control system for the Xbox 360.

And to confirm the rumours that have been circulating the industry of late, the microphone-shaped device will now be accompanied by the release of a sub-controller - a supplementary device which, like the Wii nunchuck, will handle precise character movement and other functions. However, gamers will also be able to use a standard DualShock or Sixaxis controller for these elements.

Working in conjunction with the PlayStation Eye camera, the Move system is able to detect the precise movement, angle, and position in 3D space of the motion controller. The movement tracking is accompanied by the high-tech innards of the Move which includes a three-axis gyroscope, a three-axis accelerometer and a terrestrial magnetic field sensor. So whether you're swishing a tennis racket or stabbing someone with a sword, the movements are accurately read and transferred to the onscreen action. "Furthermore, PlayStation Eye camera can capture the player's voice or image, enabling augmented reality experiences," says the press release, clearly keen to corner every facet of the alternative interface gaming scene.

Apparently, 36 third-party developers and publishers are supporting the device, and this year SCE Worldwide Studios is set to release more than 20 games, "that are either dedicated to or supported with the PlayStation Move platform". It seems that you'll be able to buy it in a console bundle, in a starter pack (complete with PlayStation Eye and a game) and alone. Pricing is yet to be officially announced but \$100 is being batted about for the Starter package.

Sony has been showing off the tech at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco and reports suggest that it is every bit as precise as the company has suggested. The demo titles include Move Party, a sort of augmented reality video chat system, and Sports Champion, a multi-event title, complete with archery and table tennis (Joystiq has some images [here](#)).

Clearly there are going to be both favourable and sniffily dismissive comparisons to the Wii set-up. Some gamers believe Move is desperately off pace, the device's resemblance to the four-year-old Nintendo technology symptomatic of Sony's inability to lead in the current generation. Others however, think it's a brilliant trade off between the ambition of Natal (which uses a sensor array to detect the player's 3D movement with no need for controllers) and the tactile feedback of the Wii control set-up. The immediacy of the motion technology would seem to contrast with early reports on the Natal, which have mentioned latency issues. (Though those worries have been countered to some extent).

So what do you think?

- Games
- Sony
- PlayStation

Keith Stuart

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## FF13's UK launch bigger than WoW

Did you go?

Only the biggest gaming brands get their own retail launch event and Final Fantasy 13 was one of them. The UK launch event was held in London yesterday with, apparently, thousands turning up to meet producer Yoshinori Kitase and art director Tetsuya Nomura. According to HMV's Tim Ellis the event was their biggest yet.

Today's Final Fantasy 13 signing at HMV's flagship store on Oxford Street was the biggest game launch the store has ever seen. With thousands of fans queuing up round the block it even beats our store's previous best game launch event, which was for World of Warcraft.

As the picture above shows there was plenty of dressing up for the occasion - were you there? - so let's hope the game was worth the effort. I'm going to grab some time on it today but anyone here started playing Final Fantasy 13 yet? If so what do you think so far?

- Games

Greg Howson

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## Google forced to delay British launch of Nexus phone

Setbacks with the internet group's first handset will see competing products arrive on the market first

Google's attempt to break into the mobile phone market has hit serious problems in Britain with the launch of its flagship Nexus One device understood to have been delayed until the middle of next month.

The setback means that by the time Google's first own-branded foray into the market this side of the Atlantic is available to consumers, its local network partner Vodafone will have launched a competing product, which analysts say is better, called the HTC Legend.

While Google has been working with the industry on the Android mobile phone software for several years, the Nexus One, made by Taiwan's HTC, is the first handset over which the search engine group has had complete control. But launching a new phone has proved more difficult than Google expected.

It was released in the US in January, but Google's decision to sell it solely through its website immediately came in for criticism as buyers struggled to get help with technical problems, and Google, which has traditionally relied on email for consumer contact, was forced to introduce telephone helpline support and the problems it has experienced in the US has given it reason to pause over the phone's launch outside the US, to make sure it has its customer service operations in place. Last week Goldman Sachs slashed its estimate for Nexus One sales this year from 3.5m units to 1m worldwide.

In the UK, Google will not only sell the phone at full price to any customer who wants to put their existing sim card into it, but it has also teamed up with Vodafone, which will offer the device free to anyone willing to sign a £35 monthly contract.

But the delay in the launch of the Nexus One, which under Google's original plan would have been available earlier this month, means that it will come after the launch of rival Android devices that analysts reckon are at least as good, if not better. Vodafone, for instance, will be offering the HTC Legend in April which has the same operating system as the Nexus One but is more stylish: being built from a single piece of milled aluminium. Orange and T-Mobile, meanwhile, will both be stocking the HTC Desire – which is exactly the same as the Nexus One, but has an optical trackpad instead of a trackball – from next month.

The delay also means the Google device will be available in the UK only weeks before another hotly anticipated gadget, Apple's iPad. Several of the UK's mobile phone companies are finalising deals with Apple to sell the tablet computer to British consumers. Unlike its last mobile device, the iPhone, which was offered through just one exclusive partner for the first two years, the iPad is expected to be available through multiple network operators from the start.

Apple will ship two versions of the iPad in the UK, one that can access the internet using short-range wi-fi networks and one that can also access 3G mobile phone networks. But Apple needs to sign deals with at least one UK mobile network, because the iPad makes use of micro-sims, meaning that buyers cannot just put the sim card from their existing handsets into it. In fact, it will be the first device launched in the UK that uses micro-sims.

Apple said earlier this month that the device will go on sale in the UK towards the end of April but the mobile phone companies believe that the 3G version of the iPad will not be available until May. Orange, T-Mobile, O2 and Vodafone all expect to be selling the iPad to customers and they are all locked in talks with the Californian company. Apple, however, has made it plain that it does not want iPad users to be tied to long-term contracts with any mobile phone operator. Instead it wants users to be able to pay for mobile network access on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Vodafone refused to comment. A spokesperson for Google added: "Our plans for launching the Nexus One in the UK are on track and in line with our statement in January that we would launch in spring 2010."

- This article was amended on 15 March 2010 to add comments from Google.

- [Google](#)
- [Apple](#)
- [Vodafone](#)
- [Mobile phones](#)
- [iPad](#)
- [iPhone](#)

[Richard Wray](#)

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## A rare peek inside Google's HQ

Just what makes this mighty media organisation tick? An exclusive extract from a new book about the company offers some insights

To visit Google's headquarters in Mountain View, California, is to travel to another planet. The natives wander about in T-shirts and shorts, zipping past volleyball courts and organic-vegetable gardens while holding their open laptops at shoulder height, like waiters' trays. Those laptops are gifts from the company, as is free food, wi-fi-enabled commuter buses, healthcare, dry cleaning, gyms, massages and car washes, all designed to keep its employees happy and on campus. Engineers – who make up half of the 20,000 employees – are granted 20% of their time to work on any project that strikes their fancy. A non-engineer attending engineering meetings would be wise to come with a translator: participants may as well be speaking Swahili.

Even in a recession, Google's business grows. Its annual advertising revenue – more than \$21bn – equates to the total amount spent on advertising across all American consumer magazines. And appropriately for a company with such mighty ambitions, instead of one CEO decision-maker, Google has three: co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin plus their CEO, Eric Schmidt. Inside the offices Schmidt is a rarity in that he usually wears a conservative white or pale-blue shirt, suit and tie. By contrast Page and Brin, like most of their colleagues, wear T-shirts, jeans and sneakers – though Brin is partial to colourful Crocs.

The seeds for Google's success were planted by Page and Brin when they met as graduate students at Stanford in 1995. Each of their parents were scientists and both attended Montessori schools, where they were accustomed to making their own rules. They nurtured their Google search idea in their dorm rooms, downloading the entire web and all its links (their prototype search engine used these links to chart and connect not just an island of the web, but the entire ocean). They were, though, no more breathtakingly brilliant than their Stanford peers, according to one of their engineering professors, Dr Terry Winograd. But where Page and Brin stood out, he says, was in their boldness.

They spoke of changing the world, of making all of its information available to everyone. They would sneak into the loading dock where Stanford computers were delivered to boost the computing power of their search engine. They refused to make lots of quick money by selling their search idea to corporate suitors. Then they dropped out from

university in 1998 and rented space in a Menlo Park garage, a hand-lettered sign on the door announcing "Google Worldwide Headquarters".

I started visiting the Google planet in 2007. The company did not welcome my idea for a book, and it took many months to win the company's cooperation. I first emailed Schmidt, whom I had previously interviewed, but he was cautious, saying Page and Brin were always reluctant to give any of their time to books or journalists. From the engineers' standpoint, time spent with writers is inefficient.

It took several trips to Silicon Valley and a torrent of emails to win tentative approval. Yet in the end, Google was extraordinarily cooperative: in all, Schmidt granted me 12 interviews over my two-and-a-half years researching the company. And I learned that Google's audaciousness stems from Page and Brin's assumption that the traditional media world is always inefficient. Their mission is to figure out how to eradicate these inefficiencies.

It did not take long for Google, born only 11 years ago, to stop calling itself a search engine and start referring to itself as a media company. Its aim, Schmidt told me in 2008, was to become the world's first \$100bn media company – twice the size of the then-largest, Disney. Little wonder that when the traditional, non-engineering led media companies finally woke up to the fact that their business model was imperilled by Google and the internet, it was very late in the day.

What is striking about Google's founders is their clarity. Before they started making money in late 2001, they were burning through a cool \$25m that had been invested by two venture capital firms. Yet still they insisted on providing free meals and services to all Google employees, and rejected – to the consternation of those venture capitalists – a \$3m offer from Visa for a regular ad on the uncluttered Google search page. Users would be offended, they said.

Page and Brin also rejected the idea that anyone should be allowed to pay to rank higher in the search results. They insisted that one way to build a team culture was for everyone to share an office. And they defied the conventional wisdom of the time, that portals like Yahoo! and AOL were thriving because they trapped visitors in their walled garden and could thus sell many more ads. What mattered, Page and Brin said, was building user trust. By making the average search take less than half a second and, unlike most portals, by not trying to trap users on Google

content sites, they would win the public's trust. Build it right, they believed, and the people will come.

Media mogul Barry Diller remembers arranging to see the co-founders when they were still in their second-floor offices above a bicycle store in Palo Alto. As they talked, Diller was disconcerted to see that Page did not lift his head from the keyboard of his hand-held device, and that Brin arrived late on his Rollerblades.

"Is this boring?" Diller asked Page.

"No, I'm interested. I always do this."

"Well, you can't do this," said Diller. "Choose."

"I'll do this," said Page, not lifting his head.

At the time, Diller was insulted and conversed only with Brin. But with the passage of time, he came to think that, "more than most people, they were wildly self-possessed".

Brin, who is more sociable than Page, has his own quirks. He will often get lost in deep thought and forget about meetings. So focused is he on engineering and maths, he sometimes displays a fundamental innocence about how the world works. During one interview in a small conference room, down the hall from the second-floor glassed office he shares with Page, Brin playfully ribbed me for writing a book. "People don't buy books," he said. "You might as well put it online. [He meant: you might as well publish it for free.] You might make more money if you put it online; more people will read it and get excited about it."

There's little evidence that free books succeed, I replied. Stephen King tried it, and gave up the effort because he thought it was doomed. The usually voluble Brin grew quiet. If there were no advance from a publisher, I said, who would pay the writer's travel expenses? With no publisher, who would edit the book, and how would they get paid for their work? Who would pay lawyers to vet it? And who would hire people to market the book, so that all those potential online readers could discover it?

"I guess that's true," Brin acknowledged a little sheepishly, ready to change the subject.

But this exchange hinted at a truth about Brin and Page, and the company they have forged. Their starting predicate – that the old ways of traditional media are inefficient and scream to be changed – is one reason why Google has fundamentally misread the reaction of publishers and authors to its quest to digitise the 20m or so books ever

published. While Google did reach agreement with a variety of libraries, including those of Harvard and Oxford universities, like good Montessori students Page and Brin did not first ask the permission of publishers and authors before digitising their copyrighted books – backing off only after a lawsuit was filed.

Google was very clear about the value of digitising the world's books. Such clarity was reinforced by the engineering ethos that underpins the company, of wanting to measure and quantify everything. They measure the value of adverts by the number of clicks they attract. They measure the worth of YouTube, which they acquired in 2006, by the user traffic it generates. They hire engineers by relying heavily on their SAT scores. They rejected CEO candidates who lacked engineering degrees, finally hiring Schmidt in late 2001 because, like them, he had one. Their righteous corporate slogan – "don't be evil" – has the virtue of clarity, at least.

And then came China. When building its search engine business in the People's Republic, Google compromised by sanitising certain search results. Searchers seeking information about tanks in Tiananmen Square or the Dalai Lama could not find them. Google was making a corporate compromise in order to reach the largest consumer marketplace in the world. It may not have been "evil", but it surely wasn't "good".

The decision made Brin particularly uncomfortable. As a refugee from the former Soviet Union – his parents fled when he was six because they were Jewish, and scientific opportunities were closed to them – human rights was one area where he did not behave like a cold, calculating engineer.

When a resolution was introduced at the annual Google shareholder meeting in May 2008 to abandon China, the management voted it down. Schmidt, who is two decades older than Page and Brin, and often plays the role of grown-up, championed a "no" vote. But there was one management abstention: Brin.

Then, late last year, Google announced it was tired of compromising with China and might pull out. This position – it was not a decision – was championed by Brin, and this time Google's management spoke with one voice, for they had learned that the Gmail accounts of Chinese dissidents were being hacked into, presumably with the support of the government. Allow such behaviour to go unpunished, and Google risked subverting the user trust that had been at the core of its success.

Clearly, Google's push for "cloud computing", which asks users to entrust their personal data to Google servers, would be doomed without that trust. So the threat to leave China unless the government agreed to keep its hands off search results and personal data was as much a business as a personal decision.

Today, Google confronts challenges from governments across the world. Britain and the EU are concerned about privacy and monopoly. France is alarmed about how Google books might threaten the copyrights of its authors. The US and other governments are concerned about its size. The purist engineers' dream that Page and Brin began with – that all the world's information can be placed at our fingertips, and universally shared – is colliding with nations' beliefs and values that are far from universal.

Take what happened recently in an Italian courtroom, where three senior Google executives were found guilty of violating the privacy of a boy with Down's syndrome, after a video of him being taunted by teenagers was uploaded on to the Google Video site. The court said the video was "offensive to human dignity" – which is what the Chinese or Iranian governments say about Google searches that yield results about a free Tibet or human rights violations. Although Google took down the video soon after complaints were lodged, the court acted as if these three executives – a senior vice-president, the global privacy counsel, and a former Google Italy board member – sit in a control room at Google Video's headquarters deciding which clips will appear. By contrast, Google regards itself as a postal service delivering information, and so should not be held accountable if a delivered "letter" is deemed hateful.

But again, because engineers cannot measure fears or xenophobia, Google has been slow to react. As Bill Gates and Microsoft learned when it was brought to trial for violating anti-trust laws a decade ago, governments are the 800lb gorilla – much more formidable than a business competitor.

Google's engineering culture brings great virtue, but also a vice. The company often lacks an antenna for sensing how governments, companies and people will react to its constant innovations. YouTube, for example, is brilliantly engineered and hosts around 40% of internet videos – yet it makes no money, because advertisers shy away from user-generated content that is unpredictable and might harm their "friendly" ads. As late as traditional media was to wake to Google, it too was late in understanding how advertisers think. In the past year, Google has paid

to lure more professionally produced content on to YouTube, and is starting to charge for it. Traditional media, desperate to tap fresh sources of revenue, has suddenly found that Google may be a willing ally in charging for content after all.

No Google search can tell the future. If the public or its representatives come to believe that Google favours certain companies, monopolises knowledge, invades users' privacy, or is as guilty of hubris as were other corporate giants such as Microsoft and IBM, then it will be more vulnerable. If, on the other hand, Google maintains its deposit of public trust, continuing to put users first, and does not start to lumber like an elephant, it will be difficult to catch.

- [Google](#)
- [Sergey Brin](#)
- [Larry Page](#)
- [Media business](#)
- [Internet](#)
- [Intellectual property](#)

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## 'Free iPad' scam spreading online

Signing up for that 'free' offer could actually end up costing you as scammers use Facebook and Twitter to tempt gadget seekers

It's a day for scams. Think you've been given the chance to sign up as an iPad tester via Facebook? No you haven't - it's a scam which actually signs you up to a premium rate mobile service, warns the security company Sophos.

"Facebook pages with names such as "iPad Researchers Wanted - Get An iPad Early And Keep It!" and "The Mega iPad Giveaway!" prey on the public's desire to own a free iPad," notes Sophos.

Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant at Sophos, has explained the scam on his blog.

Here's how it works. The scam pages typically take their intended victims through a three step process:

1) "Become a Fan" of the page; 2) "Invite your friends" to also become fans of the page, and take part in the "special promotion" [*they might not stay your friends for that long afterwards - CA*]; 3) "Claim" or "Apply" for your prize.

Some of the pages pretend to have thousands of positive comments from other Facebook users claiming that the offer is genuine, Sophos notes. And it's also running on Twitter - so beware there of people or accounts offering "Free Apple iPad!" or similar. (The key, among other points, is that Apple hasn't actually begun selling the iPad yet: it won't do that until April.)

When the victim applies for the prize they are typically taken to an online quiz, and their mobile phone number is requested so they can be sent the results.

"As if inviting all of your friends to participate in a scheme that you haven't properly investigated wasn't bad enough, the biggest mistake of all is to hand over your mobile phone number," said Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant at Sophos. "You will be signed up for a premium rate service, costing you in the region of \$10 every week, until you unsubscribe. The scammers who created the fake iPad Facebook pages are undoubtedly skimming off some of this money by bringing new unwitting subscribers to the cellphone service."

Cluley notes: "The good news is that after I alerted Facebook's security team about this page they disabled it very promptly. However, the bad news is that there are many other similar Facebook pages being created on the social network designed to scam unsuspecting users.

"Not all of them pretend to offer an iPad, so be on your guard for other scams too. The most important thing to remember is to not invite your friends to any Facebook page or application until you have thoroughly researched what it's about. Furthermore, you should never be tempted to hand over your mobile phone number to some daft internet quiz."

There's also a video showing how the scam works. The lesson: be wary. And stop wanting free stuff. There's always a price to pay.

- [Apple](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Social networking](#)
- [iPad](#)
- [Scams](#)
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## **Mobiles move from cannibal to creator**

I've lost count of the number of products that mobile phones have replaced – but now they're bringing new ones into being

The march of the mobile goes on and on but it is now taking off in a new direction with goodness knows what consequences. Until recently, the mobile phone's distinguishing feature was its ability to gobble up competing products in a way that no other consumer product ever has. I used to keep a tally of all the products that could have been sold separately but which have been cannibalised by the mobile: cameras, calculators, books, video cameras, music players, satellite navigation and so on. When the list reached 60, I gave up, because the arrival of the iPhone and iPod Touch made the list of extra products grow exponentially.

Now the mobile is moving into new terrain. Having satiated its ravenous appetite for existing products, it is creating services that only exist because of its unique technology. For those who don't have one of the new smartphones boasting augmented reality – say 99% of all the people on the planet – it might be helpful to imagine the screen of your mobile as a radar device. When you are looking at the screen as if you are about to take a photo the "radar" (a mixture of wireless, satellite positioning and cellphone triangulation) picks up whatever data there is within whatever distance you choose. If you are looking at the screen using, say, Google's Layar, and rotating yourself 360 degrees, you might find dozens of messages left by twitterers less than a mile away, photos from websites, relevant data from the Wikipedia or whatever. One new iPhone app, Worksnug, gives you a panoramic view of all the public Wi-Fi hotspots around you: the idea is to build up a community of people working in public spaces. If you point Google's Goggles app on its new Nexus One phone at a picture of, say, the Mona Lisa on a computer it immediately recognises what it is and comes up with all sorts of relevant information. Google's SkyMap app enables you to see current patterns of stars in the sky. Owners of these smartphones in effect have a CCTV camera in their pockets, only with a far wider range than the static ones libertarians complain about. The only difference is that in this case people have (mostly) given their permission for the data they generate to be monitored, even if they are often unaware of what they have let themselves in for. We are only at the very beginning of a new era in the application of mobiles where the sky is literally the limit.

Notice I have been writing about apps for once without much mention of the iPhone. This isn't because the landscape has suddenly changed. The iPhone family is still galaxies ahead in the popularity of its apps. But the arrival of Google is suddenly a big, big threat which helps to explain why Apple is suing HTC, the manufacturer of Google's Nexus One phone, for infringement of patents. Apple's own augmented reality screen can see a huge threat from Google looming over the horizon.

Why? It is partly because Google apps are based on open source – balm for the bedroom coder – rather than being behind Apple's beautiful though closed wall. But it is mainly because Google controls the world's information. If data is the gold dust of the new era, then Google will own the deepest mine. If, like me, you are willingly immersed in a snowstorm of Google products from GMail to mapping and Google Earth, then a phone like the Nexus One (sold from Google's website) which has access to everything about me is both a potentially awesome product in its own right and a huge threat to my liberty if Google misuses that information. It may be of significance that my cameraphone comparison site – which reached a peak of more than 21,000 views a day this week – shows a far higher level of initial interest in Google's Nexus One phone than in any previous one. Apple, be warned.

Google is nicking one of the secrets of Apple's success: the more you can control, the better user experience you can give. This is very bad for individual freedom and for the openness of the web but it probably won't worry most users if it delivers a great experience: you can always change your phone every 18 months or sooner on pay-as-you go. But what if years from now Google's monopoly of search is extended to the phone itself? Or what if Nokia – which has been agonisingly slow to get its apps store together but still has a claimed 37% of the global market for phones – exploits its latent strength with more vertical integration? There may not be any danger to the world economy as a whole if there are a cluster of vertically integrated silos as long as one – whether Apple, Google, Nokia or Samsung or HTC – doesn't become as powerful as Google is in search and Microsoft in operating systems. There is a kind of underlying paradox at work: the greater the user experience, the worse the dangers of an unacceptable monopoly developing.

While on the subject of economics, the profession, distracted by the credit crunch, has a lot of work to do to understand the impact of phones on economic growth. There is evidence that the explosion of mobiles is a stimulant to GDP (gross domestic product) particularly in developing countries such as India, as a recent report funded by Vodafone showed.

But what about the huge number of products not now being purchased because they are bundled into your mobile – let alone the thousands of products that come free? Since mobile devices are still falling in price in real terms, it is certain that far less is being spent on mobiles than would have been on the products they absorbed.

Of course, GDP is not necessarily affected, because not having to purchase so many different products will leave more money in our pockets to buy other things. But it is almost certainly the case that GDP has fallen compared with what would otherwise have been the case while our personal satisfaction – with having so many products in a single device – will have gone sharply up. The disruptive power of the mobile knows no end.

- [Mobile phones](#)
- [Augmented reality](#)
- [Android](#)
- [Google](#)
- [iPhone](#)
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## Apple hits 10bn songs - but what about music sales growth?

The growth in iTunes tracks sold is encouraging - but if you consider what's driving it, the picture might not be so rosy

Steve Jobs *will* be pleased. Not only did it happen on his birthday, but the 10 billionth song sold through the iTunes Music Store was by one of his musical heroes, Johnny Cash; specifically, "Guess Things Happen That Way", which was bought by Louie Sulcer of Woodstock, Georgia, who receives a \$10,000 iTunes gift card.

Jobs however was not moved to comment on the sale; instead that was left to Eddy Cue, the company's vice president of "internet services", who said: "We're grateful to all of our customers for helping us reach this amazing milestone. We're proud that iTunes has become the number one music retailer in the world, and selling 10 billion songs is truly staggering."

Certainly it is - but how quickly will the next 10 billion roll around? Looking at the best-selling songs indicates that they have all come from the past couple of years.

There's another question too: is the number of sales of songs keeping step with the number of iPods, given that it's the iPod that is reckoned to be the driver of sales?

Certainly the data (recorded on Wikipedia) suggests that sales keep growing.

But iPod sales are growing too - and no matter what replacement period you think there is (as per our story of last November), you can't see *exponential* growth in sales of songs compared to the number of iPods out there. People who have iPods don't seem to buy more and more and more songs in the sort of replacement that they did for CDs replacing vinyl (understandably, as CDs are digital, just like iTunes tracks, and you can rip them).

In fact, they seem to track each other fairly closely - so that with sensible estimates of between 100m and 150m iPods actually in use (because although Steve Jobs did say at the iPad launch that 250m iPods have been sold, not all of those are still working, you can be sure), you have to think that music sales are only weakly tracking iPod sales.

The graph above shows how the number of songs sold per day has taken off. (Note: we've had to interpolate for the 7bn and 9bn figures, because Apple never announced them. But given the linear shape of the

graph we felt it was fair to use a linear interpolation for them, as they fit other numbers that have been provided.)

Then there's more bad news: iPod sales fell year-on-year in the most recent Christmas quarter. So if it's iPod sales driving iTunes sales, then the signs already point towards an eventual flattening. Even now, the graph seems to show straight-line growth.

It is surely twilight of the (dumb) iPods - for the iPhone and iPod Touch are still doing well, and the iPad looks like it could do well too. But they'll never be the rocket that gets lit under the sales of downloaded music.

So it's a great day for Louie Sulcer, but for the music industry generally, this is only worth one cheer. Salvation, if it exists, will still have to be found elsewhere.

- Apple
- itunes
- Digital music and audio

Charles Arthur

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## Tech Weekly: Digital changes at the BBC

Charles Arthur, Rick Wray and Aleks Krotoski take on the BBC in this week's podcast, picking apart the latest news on the corporation - from the director general's strategy review to the battles with iPhone app developers. What's behind the BBC's contradictory new media messaging? Is digital really the future, or will they abandon a decade of investment to the archives?

Meanwhile Bobbie Johnson takes the team through the Musee Mecanique in San Francisco, the leading collection of pre-digital entertainment machines; and Mercedes Bunz speaks with Blaise Aguera y Arcas, the man behind Bing Maps.

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## Twitter goes anywhere - but keeps advertising plans under wraps

Scotching expectations that it would announce an advertising platform, Twitter has instead unveiled ways for other sites to integrate more easily with it

For thousands of webheads gathered in Texas, the past few days have been a dizzying whirlwind of at South By South West Interactive - a conference/festival that is essentially Glastonbury for geeks. And while the event's panel sessions and parties have been skewered by erstwhile Guardian columnist Paul Carr, plenty of people were looking forward to an on-stage appearance by Twitter chief executive Evan Williams.

Why? Because the company was expected to talk about how it was going to make money - chiefly by showing off its rumoured advertising system.

Instead, Williams did something different: he unveiled a new platform called "@anywhere" that it says will weave it even deeper into the fabric of the web.

Confused? Let's look at what @anywhere lets you do.

According to Williams, it will allow third party websites to pull information from Twitter very easily, letting sites implement actions such as "follow me" links or show profile information without much hassle. It will also let people log in to other websites using their Twitter credentials, in the same way many sites have latched on to Facebook Connect.

"Discovery is one of the hardest challenges," he said in a Q&A with London-based economist and blogger Umair Haque that drew plenty of brickbats from the assembled crowd.

Williams characterised @anywhere as a door into Twitter. "A window is transparent, but a door is open. A door lets you come in and mess with what you're doing".

Still not clear? I'm not surprised. Here's a little more detail from Twitter's blog:

Our open technology platform is well known and Twitter APIs are already widely implemented but this is a different approach because we've created something incredibly simple. Rather than implementing APIs, site owners need only drop in a few lines of

javascript. [...] Imagine being able to follow a New York Times journalist directly from her byline, tweet about a video without leaving YouTube, and discover new Twitter accounts while visiting the Yahoo! home page—and that's just the beginning.

So technically, this is a way to package certain actions that are currently possible using the API in a way that non-developers can easily implement. Dropping a line of JavaScript into a web page is an awful lot easier than using your API credentials.

A lot of this was already possible, if somewhat obscured, by using a variety of widgets and other techniques (you'll notice we have a "Tweet this" link at the top of each story). And while it seems like it will be great for expanding the integration of Twitter into a variety of websites - important for breaking the service out of the silo it currently sits in and making it far more mainstream - it doesn't really answer the big question everybody was looking at: how does Twitter make money.

Indeed, according to CNet, Williams sidestepped questions about Twitter's plans for advertising by using the rather cringeworthy line "it's not an ad platform, it's an '@' platform".

Still, leaving that aside, @anywhere raises a number of questions:

**What's the impact going to be on Twitter developers?** Will this have any adverse affect on the ecosystem of application developers and engineers who are working on services that hook into Twitter?

**Is this Twitter fighting with Facebook, Google and others for the universal login?** And what is the point of a universal login if everybody thinks their service is it? Will being more integrated into other websites bring more users Twitter's way?

**Will this allow Twitter to make money?** There doesn't seem to be any indication that money is likely to change hands here. But the service is clearly being aimed at publishing sites and media companies who, one might expect, could be a revenue source in the future (even if not all of them are swimming in pools of cash right now).

And, most importantly:

**What's going on with Twitter's ad platform?** Suggestions are that it's going to be fairly similar to Google's AdSense programme - advertise against keyword search terms. Is this a step towards getting that more traction, simply because it might bring in more users and therefore give Twitter more opportunity to show adverts?

- [Twitter](#)
- [Social networking](#)
- [Internet](#)
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## Blind soldier uses tongue device to 'see'

Camera sends electrical pulses to lollypop-like sensor in mouth allowing Craig Lundberg to visualise surroundings

A soldier who was blinded by a rocket propelled grenade in Iraq three years ago has been fitted with a device that allows him to "see" with his tongue, enabling him to visualise shapes, read words and walk unaided.

Lance Corporal Craig Lundberg, 24, from Walton, Liverpool, lost his sight while on patrol with the 2nd Battalion Duke of Lancaster's in Basra in 2007. He has been selected by the Ministry of Defence to test the BrainPort miniature video camera and sensory equipment, which could revolutionise treatment for blind patients.

The device works by converting visual images into a series of electrical pulses that are relayed to the tongue. The differing strengths and patterns of the tingles can be interpreted to build up a picture of surroundings and enable users to navigate around objects.

The device consists of a tiny video camera attached to a pair of sunglasses. It is linked by wires to a plastic lollypop-like sensor which users place on their tongue to receive the electrical impulses.

"It feels like licking a nine-volt battery or like popping candy," Lundberg explained. "The camera sends signals down onto the lollypop and onto your tongue, you can then determine what they mean and transfer it to shapes.

"It's only a prototype, but the potential to change my life is massive. It has enabled me to pick up objects straight away, I can reach out and pick them up when before I would be fumbling around."

The MoD is paying around £18,000 for the device and training for the trial. Major General Gale Pollock, a retired US officer who worked on the development programme, said the BrainPort sends information to 400 points on the tongue connection. Designers plan to upgrade this to 4,000 points, providing a clearer image.

- Blindness and visual impairment
- Military

Owen Bowcott

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## How secure is your password? Let's explain it visually

From those folks at CXO, a quick way of assessing whether your password actually stops bad people, er, passing

*Photo from Flickr. [CC-BY licensed](#)*

Those folks over at [CXO](#) have been playing with Google Mail's password strength meter. It turns out - as if you needed to be told - that simple dictionary words such as "princess" or well-known phrases such as "biteme" (yes, Bart Simpson, I'm talking to you) aren't secure at all.

You may think that you know it, but the [evidence from Rocky](#) [earlier this year](#) doesn't lie - people are still using amazingly simple passwords. Don't be among them.

- [Data and computer security](#)

[Charles Arthur](#)

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## Way of the Samurai 3 for Xbox 360 and PS3 | Game review

Xbox 360/PS3; £39.99; cert 16+: Gamebridge

The year is 1560. Which – as any fule, or Manga fan, kno – is the Sengoku Era, when Feudal Japan was in a violent political mess.

As that movie voiceover chap would have it, it was a time of war, and that makes it a very popular setting for ambitious hack-and-slash games such as the Way of the Samurai series. Sadly, the execution of this new version doesn't live up to the ambition. You start the game as inexperienced Samurai in a world divided into three: the Fujimori Clan, the Ouka Clans and the villagers just trying to get by. You have choices as the game unfolds. Pick a side? Play one clan against the others for your own gain and greed? Be good? Be evil? Be violent or kneel submissively in apology? Your choices will determine what sort of game you have – and which of the 20+ endings you see.

The aim then is Fallout 3 with blades. The reality though is some way off as the AI isn't up to standard, making the "cause and effect" notion somewhat piecemeal, and generally only succeeding during a handful of big decisions. The minute-to-minute stuff – draw sword or go gently – is inconsistent, with swords pulled on you with alarming regularity regardless of demeanour, even before you've made it across the region for a weapons tutorial. And not only is it possible to die en route to that tutorial, it's also possible to die during it – which seems unnecessarily harsh. Also, why can you only accept one task at a time? Given that the tasks generally involve running across the same eight locations to find things or deliver items, they soon become annoyingly repetitious.

The good v evil decisions are also somewhat undermined by villagers wandering onto your sword while you're trying to defend them from the bad guys. As for the knelt apology, it's a nice idea but one that generally just gives your opponent several seconds to slash away at you without response.

And yet ... If you've got the time and wherewithal to accustom yourself to the foibles of the AI, the notion that you're going to spend a lot of time wandering, wondering and repeating (and repeating) certain activities, the deeper game gradually becomes oddly compelling. In short then, this is not a breakout WotS remould but a fan-pleasing, business-mostly-as-usual, genre franchise. Fourth time lucky perhaps chaps?

Rating: 3/5

- [Games](#)
- [Xbox](#)
- [PlayStation](#)

[Neil Davey](#)

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## Climate activists predict direct action campaign against Scotland's 'Kingsnorth'

Ayrshire Power starts planning process for power station which would be UK's first to use carbon capture and storage

Climate activists are predicting a campaign of direct action against a new coal-fired power station that could be the UK's first to fit carbon-capture technology.

Campaigners say that if the proposed 1.6GW station in Ayrshire is approved, it will be the "new Kingsnorth", a reference to E.ON's controversial coal-fired plant in Kent that sparked battles between protesters and police before E.ON finally shelved it.

The warnings from Friends of the Earth (FoE) Scotland, WWF Scotland and the World Development Movement came as Ayrshire Power today took the first formal step towards applying for planning permission for the new station, at Hunterston on the Firth of Clyde.

The proposal has intensified the conflicts between green campaigners, power companies and the government over "decarbonising" energy supply and lessening the UK's heavy reliance on coal and gas for its electricity needs.

Juliet Swann, of FoE Scotland, said many local residents and a "large coalition" of environment groups would resist the scheme. It would increase the UK's use of coal, and, at first, use untested carbon capture and storage technology to tackle only a quarter of its CO2 emissions.

Carbon capture and storage (CCS) involves trapping a percentage of the carbon dioxide emissions from power stations by collecting, transporting and then burying the CO2 so that it does not escape into the atmosphere and contribute to climate change.

Carbon capture should first be used on existing power stations, such as Longannet, which is one of two coal-fired stations in the running for a new carbon-capture demonstration project, Swann said.

"Carbon capture and storage is potentially a way to reach a low-carbon future," she said. "But it should be demonstrated on existing plants first, not least so we can share the technology with the rest of the world, and in doing so repay our debt to them for supplying us with so much of our dirty energy."

The dispute also focuses attention on the Scottish government's determination to abandon nuclear power, which generates at least 26%

of Scotland's electricity, by increasing coal-fired production. The proposed station is near to Hunterston B nuclear station, which is due to close down in 2016; Scotland's other nuclear station, at Torness, will shut down in 2023.

Energy planning in Scotland is controlled by ministers in Edinburgh, while ministers in London control funding for carbon capture and energy taxation across the UK. The first minister, Alex Salmond, has championed carbon capture and the coal industry while at the same time insisting Scotland can become a "green powerhouse" from renewable energy.

To the fury of campaigners and local residents, Salmond's government aims to fast track the Hunterston proposal by using a new streamlined planning process, bypassing the often lengthy and expensive public-consultation rules that normally apply.

Residents are already challenging this move in court, claiming ministers illegally added Hunterston to the list of fast-track projects on the "national planning framework" without consulting them properly.

With the UK pledging to cut CO2 emissions by up to 42% by 2020, Ayrshire Power plans to make Hunterston the first newly built coal-fired plant in the UK to "capture" CO2 emissions and store them under the seabed.

New legislation requires power companies to fit carbon-capture technology for at least 300MW of its output. Ayrshire Power says 400MW (25% of its emissions) will be captured first, and, eventually, 90% of its CO2 emissions.

But Ayrshire Power admits it will need another £1bn – mostly from the UK government's carbon-capture funding programme – to pay for the CCS technology on top of the £2bn cost of building the power station.

The project has already suffered a serious blow after one of its original developers, the giant Danish power company Dong, withdrew from the proposal only days after E.ON suspended its plans for Kingsnorth.

Like E.ON, Dong also cited the recession and the heavy cost of investing in "clean coal". Ayrshire Power's sole owner, the Manchester-based airports and property firm Peel Holdings, admits it now needs significant new investors in the Hunterston project, feeding doubts that it will go ahead.

Ayrshire Power began the first stage in the fast-track process today under a new "gate check" procedure, where the government and

statutory bodies check the company has the right documentation for the planning process. It has not confirmed when it will formally submit its full application.

Muir Miller, Hunterston's project director, said the plant would use up to 25% less coal than power stations now in use, by using biofuels and "supercritical" technology to burn coal at higher temperatures. The station would power 3 million homes.

"We believe our proposal supports the UK and Scottish governments' commitment to leading the way in developing CCS to assist in decarbonising the UK's electricity sector by 2030," he said. "We remain determined to deploy this technology at full scale on a modern supercritical power station, supported by appropriate regulatory and fiscal measures."

- [Carbon capture and storage \(CCS\)](#)
- [Coal](#)
- [Energy](#)
- [Climate change](#)
- [Carbon emissions](#)
- [Kingsnorth](#)
- [Energy](#)
- [Energy industry](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Alex Salmond](#)

[Severin Carrell](#)

[Tim Webb](#)

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## **SXSW: aggregated coverage**

Sadly my colleague [Jemima Kiss](#) is not at the SXSW conference, but for those who are interested, Poynter is [liveblogging the debate on The Future of Context in Journalism](#), featuring Matt Thompson, Staci Kramer and Jay Rosen.

There is an interesting round up of coverage from SXSW by [Jonathan Dube](#) at [cyberjournalist.net](#).

- [SXSWi](#)
- [Digital media](#)

[Steve Busfield](#)

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## 11% of news on Google is original reporting. Possibly

Nieman Journalism Lab has investigated how much of the news that can be found on Google is actually real reporting as opposed to news repeating the reporting of others. It found that 11% contained original reporting.

*But*, and it is a big but, this research was carried out into treatment of a single big story about Chinese hacking on Google. Out of 121 unique stories written following a report from the New York Times, just 13 contained some original reporting and just seven were based primarily on original reporting.

Reporter Jonathan Stray asks:

"When I think of how much human effort when into re-writing those hundred other unique stories that contained no original reporting, I cringe. That's a huge amount of journalistic effort that could have gone into reporting other deserving stories. Why are we doing this? What are the legal, technical, economic and cultural barriers to simply linking to the best version of each story and moving on?"

It may well be that this one story is representative of a bigger truth about news on the web, but maybe some more analysis is required, as well as the thinking about what sort of journalism is important.

The other important "but" to mention here is that this investigation was carried out last month. However, it came to my attention when a series of tweets appeared from the SXSW tech conference in Texas. Somewhere at the conference it had been said that "only 12% of google news is original source". Via a series of tweets it quickly assumed authenticity. But there was no sourcing for the comment, no attribution, no explanation.

On a related topic, see also Stephen Glover in the Independent today about the veracity of the Sarkozy/Bruni relationship speculation. For a story that has been widely contemplated, Glover points out: "There is, in fact, no evidence at all – only unsourced rumours on the internet."

- China
- Google
- Digital media

Steve Busfield

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