The Internet is for Everyone

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"The Internet is for Everyone". How easy to say - how hard to achieve! Where are we in achieving this noble objective?

The Internet is in its 11th year of annual doubling since 1988. There are over 44 million hosts on the Internet and an estimated 150 million users, world wide. By 2006, the Internet is likely to exceed the size of the global telephone network, if it has not by that time become the telephone network by virtue of IP telephony. Moreover, tens of millions of Internet-enabled appliances will have joined traditional servers, desk tops and laptops as part of the Internet family. Pagers, cell phones and personal digital the next decade. But even at the scale of the telephone system is it sobering to realize that only half the population of Earth has ever made a telephone call.

It is estimated that commerce on the network will reach somewhere between $1.8T and $3.2T by 2003. That is only four years from now (but a long career in Internet years).

The number of users of Internet will likely reach over 300 million by the end of the year 2000, but that is only about 5% of the world's population. By 2047 the world's population may reach about 11 billion. If only 25% of the then-world"s population is on the Internet, that is nearly 3 billion users or ten times the population estimated at the end of the next year.

As high bandwidth access becomes the norm, through digital subscriber loops, cable modems and digital terrestrial and satellite radio links, the convergence of media available on the Internet will become obvious. Television, radio, telephony and the traditional print media will find counterparts on the Internet - and will be changed in profound ways by the presence of software that transforms the one-way media into interactive resources, shareable by many.

The Internet is proving to be one of the most powerful amplifiers of speech every invented. It offers a global megaphone for voices that might otherwise be heard only feebly, if at all. It invites and facilitates multiple points of view and dialog in ways unimplementable by the traditional, one-way, mass media.

The Internet can facilitate democratic practices in unexpected ways. Did you know that proxy voting for stock shareholders is now commonly supported on the Internet? Perhaps we can find additional ways in which to simplify and expand the voting franchise in other domains, including the political, as access to Internet increases.

The Internet is becoming the repository of all we have accomplished as a society. It is becoming a kind of disorganized Boswell of the human spirit. Be thoughtful in what you commit to email, news groups, and other media - it may well turn up in a web search some day. Shared databases on the Internet are acting to accelerate the pace of research progress, thanks to online access to commonly accessible repositories.

The Internet is moving off the planet! Already, interplanetary Internet is part of the NASA Mars mission program now underway at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. By 2008 we should have a well-functioning Earth-Mars network that serves as a nascent backbone of an interplanetary system of Internets - InterPlaNet is a network of Internets! Ultimately, we will have interplanetary Internet relays in polar solar orbit so that they can see most of the planets and their interplanetary gateways for most if not all of the time.

The Internet is for everyone - but it won't be if it isn't affordable by all who wish to partake of its services, so we must dedicate ourselves to making Internet as affordable as other infrastructure so critical to our well-being. While we follow Moore's Law to reduce the cost of Internet-enabling equipment, let us also seek to stimulate regulatory policies that take advantage of the power of competition to reduce costs.

The Internet is for everyone, - but it won't be if Governments restrict access to it, so we must dedicate ourselves to keeping the network unrestricted, unfettered and unregulated. We must have the freedom to speak and the freedom to hear.

The Internet is for everyone - but it won't be if it cannot keep up with the explosive demand for its services, so we must dedicate ourselves to continuing its technological evolution and development of the technical standards the lie at the heart of the Internet revolution. Let us dedicate ourselves to the support of the Internet Architecture Board, the Internet Engineering Steering Group, the Internet Research Task Force and the Internet Engineering Task Force as they drive us forward into an unbounded future.

The Internet is for everyone - but it won't be until in every home, in every business, in every school, in every town and every country on the Globe, Internet can be accessed without limitation, at any time and in every language.

The Internet is for everyone - but it won't be if it is too complex to be used easily by everyone. Let us dedicate ourselves to the task of simplifying Internet's interfaces and to educating all who are interested in its use.

The Internet is for everyone - but it won't be if legislation around the world creates a thicket of incompatible laws that hinder the growth of electronic commerce, stymie the protection of intellectual property, and stifle freedom of expression and the development of market economies. Let us dedicate ourselves to the creation of a global legal framework in which laws work across national boundaries to reinforce the upward spiral of value that Internet is capable of creating.

The Internet is for everyone - but it won't be if its users cannot protect their privacy and the confidentiality of transactions conducted on the network. Let us dedicate ourselves to the proposition that cryptographic technology sufficient to protect privacy from unauthorized disclosure should be freely available, applicable and exportable.

Moreover, as authenticity lies at the heart of trust in networked environments, let us dedicate ourselves to work towards the development of authentication methods and systems capable of supporting electronic commerce through the Internet.

The Internet is for everyone - but it won't be if parents and teachers cannot voluntarily create protected spaces for our young people for whom the full range of Internet content may be inappropriate. Let us dedicate ourselves to the development of technologies and practices that offer this protective flexibility to those who accept responsibility to provide it.

The Internet is for everyone - but it won't be if we are not responsible in its use and mindful of the rights of others who share its wealth. Let us dedicate ourselves to the responsible use of this new medium and to the proposition that with the freedoms Internet enables comes a commensurate responsibility to use these powerful enablers with care and consideration. For those who choose to abuse these privileges, let us dedicate ourselves to developing the necessary tools to combat the abuse and punish the abuser.

I hope Internauts everywhere will join with the Internet Society and like-minded organizations to achieve this easily stated but hard to achieve goal. As we near the milestone of the third millennium, what better theme could we possibly ask for than making the Internet the medium of the new millennium?

Internet IS for everyone - but it won't be unless WE make it so.