

Community Comment
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Sam Pennisi

Happy Birthday WWW

Tuesday was the 25th birthday of the world wide web or www, you fill in the rest. From a science point of view, this has been an amazing step forward in the analysis of anything. The fields of clinical and research medicine have advanced simply because of the ability of the computer and the web's ability to link computers has allowed. The natural sciences have seen similar advances. This is true in nearly any field of endeavour.

Business has also benefited simply by being able to store and retrieve more diverse and complex information than ever before. In many ways, the web is a kind of instant transportation device. We can not only share information nearly anywhere in the world but we can do it in real time and talk with people at the same time.

The entertainment industry has advanced in ways we couldn't imagine without this tool. In fact, whole new industries have developed using the web as their major platform. Most have been real additions to various areas of art; some have been more off color, if you get my drift.

The development of the web as a tool has allowed us to do things that we didn't even know were possible before this linkage. Like other tool advances before this, tools are invented for one specific need only to have users discover the many other uses that are possible with the new device.

The web is a tremendous asset for our civilization all over the world. However, we need to remember it is only a tool.

The headlines on the news almost every day remind us that no tool is perfect and any tool can be abused or used for less than positive and productive applications. On Tuesday this week, a Senate Committee accused the CIA of hacking into committee data in an attempt to hinder an investigation. A couple of months ago, Target was hacked into and personal information of customers was compromised, We didn't know what hacking was until we could do it on the web. Cell phones have become mini computers largely due to the web capabilities. We have had stores lose the ability to even open a cash register because a fiber optic line has been cut hundreds of miles away. I've been to my bank only to be told they couldn't do what I needed because their web connection was down.

On the occasion of ~~the~~ 25 years of this tool, I, for one, would like to remind us that it is only a tool. Behind every new tool there are the foundation components of that new tool. The skills and knowledge that it took to get to the new are still required to fully take advantage of the new tool. Safeguards are required to regulate the uses of the new tool. It's almost amusing to me that we are worried about the government spying on us under

the guise of security, but we give our information out freely to purchase something or share something with 600 of our closest friends.

I learned in a shop class in high school to mind your tools, know them well, or they can hurt you. It's still good advice.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.