

July 17th

Gerrit Anne (Gerry) Blaauw

Born: July 17, 1924;
The Hague, Netherlands

Blaauw was one of the principal designers of the IBM System/360 [April 7] line, together with Fred Brooks [April 19] and Gene Amdahl [Nov 16].

Among other contributions, Blaauw made the case for an 8-bit (as opposed to a 6-bit) architecture. He also designed the address translation system, the "Blaauw Box", which acted as a form of paged virtual memory, the first in a commercially sold computer. The Atlas [Dec 7], developed at Manchester University, was the first research machine to use virtual memory.

Blaauw was also one of the designer of the IBM 7030 STRETCH [April 26], and worked on the ill-fated IBM 8000, a proposed transistor-based successor to the IBM 7000 [April 26].

CACI and SIMSCRIPT July 17, 1962

California Analysis Center, Inc. (CACI) was founded on this day by Herb Karr and Harry Markowitz, who left RAND [Oct 1] to commercialize SIMSCRIPT, one of the first simulation language.

SIMSCRIPT was conceived by Markowitz, Karr, and Bernard Hausner, originally as a FORTRAN preprocessor. It influenced the design of Simula [Jan 5], the first object-oriented language.

Ed Russell later added the notion of a process into SIMSCRIPT, which he borrowed back from Simula.

Other earlier simulation languages included GPSS [Dec 12] and DYNAMO [March 21].

Slackware July 17, 1993

Slackware, a Linux [Sept 17] distribution created by Patrick Volkerding, was released on this day, making it the oldest distribution that's still maintained. Volkerding current job title is Slackware Benevolent Dictator for Life [April 18].

Slackware was based on Softlanding Linux System (SLS [Aug 15]), and inevitably became the basis for other Linux distributions, most notably SUSE.

The Slackware name refers to the "pursuit of Slack", a tenet of the Church of the Subgenius, a parody religion. The church's rather complex philosophy focuses on J. R. "Bob" Dobbs, purportedly a salesman from the 1950s who is revered as a prophet. Members seek to acquire "Slack", believing that it will reward them with a happy life without hard work or responsibilities.

Some of the Slackware iconography reflects its Church of the Subgenius connection. For example, the pipe smoked by Tux the Penguin [May 9] in Slackware is reminiscent of the one used by Bob Dobbs.

For more Linux distributions, see [Aug 15], [Sept 15], [Aug 11], [Dec 22], [Oct 20], [April 15], and [Feb 19].

First Webcasts July 17, 1995

The Macintosh New York Music Festival, which began on this day, was probably the earliest large-scale webcast.

It was organized by Apple's Webcasting Group as a series of audio webcast concerts broadcast from more than 15 clubs in NYC. One club, *The Knitting Factory*, broadcast live

visuals, including an appearance by Laurie Anderson to demo her Puppet Motel Interactive CDROM.

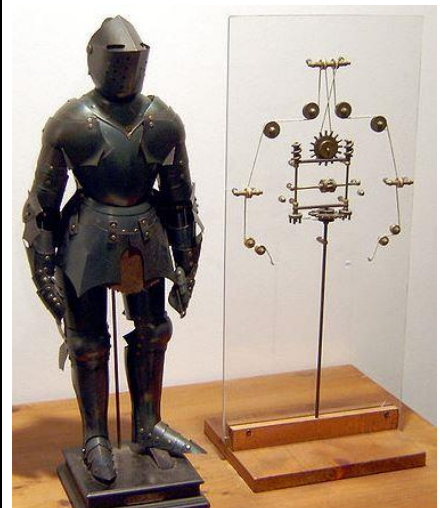
Another popular early webcast, was a concert by Metallica held on June 10, 1996 in San Francisco. However, the most popular early event was probably a Victoria's Secret Fashion Show in 1999 [Feb 15] which attracted over 1.5 million viewers.

Earlier streaming events on the Internet utilized the Mbone [July 30]: netcasts by Severe Tire Damage [June 24] in 1993 and Deth Specula [Aug 23] in 1994.

Robotic Surgery July 17, 2000

The "Da Vinci" robotic surgical system was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration on this day.

The system consists of a cart holding four robotic arms controlled from a remote console. Three of the arms can manipulate tools such as scalpels and scissors, and their jointed-wrist design mean they can actually exceed the natural range of motions of the human hand.



A model of Leonardo's robot with its inner workings on display. Photo by Erik Möller.

The system was designed to help with laparoscopy procedures,

where the surgeon must operate with a series of hand-held, long-shafted instruments.

According to the company (Intuitive Surgical), the system was called "Da Vinci" in part because of how Leonardo Da Vinci's "study of human anatomy eventually led to the design of the first known robot in history." This refers to Leonardo's robot (also known as Leonardo's mechanical knight), an automaton designed and possibly constructed by Leonardo around 1495. It could stand, sit, raise its visor, and move its arms, and had an anatomically correct jaw.

A Da Vinci robot and its "McSleepy" partner performed the first all-robotic surgery on [Oct 13] 2010.

As of early 2020, there were 5,000 Da Vinci's installed worldwide.

For more robot men, see [Feb 00], [Feb 24], [March 23], [March 24], [April 16], [April 30], [July 30], [Sept 15], [Nov 11], [Nov 30], [Dec 22]

Zeus Trojan July 17, 2007

The Zeus Trojan horse was first identified on this day. It infected MS Windows in order to steal passwords for social networks, email, and bank accounts. It employed keylogging and web form grabbing to collect data, and installed CryptoLocker ransomware.

Zeus also employed a sophisticated real-world component involving money 'mules' to smuggle and transfer stolen cash to the ringleaders in Eastern Europe. This also turned out to be its weakest link. In October 2010, over 100 people were arrested in connection with the operation.

For more virus nasties, see [Jan 26; March 26; April 30; May 5; July 13; July 15; Sept 5; Oct 26; Nov 21].

Amazon Un-sells Books July 17, 2009

Amazon.com [July 16] stopped selling the Kindle titles "Animal Farm" and "Nineteen Eighty-Four" [June 8] by George Orwell after discovering that the publisher hadn't secured the rights to publish them.

Amazon also went a "Big Brother" step further, remotely deleting the titles from the devices of the users who had purchased the book. However, Amazon also refunded the cost of the purchases.

After the usual online outrage, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos [Jan 12] posted an abject apology for the company's handling of the matter to the Kindle forum.

But that wasn't the end of the matter. On July 30, Justin Gawronski, a Michigan high-school senior, and Antoine Bruguier of California filed suit against Amazon, arguing that the company had violated its terms of service with the remote deletion. On September 25, Amazon agreed to pay \$150,000 to the plaintiffs.
