

July 26th

Håkon Wium Lie

Born: July 26, 1965;

Halden, Norway

Wium Lie proposed Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) while working with Tim Berners-Lee [June 8] and Robert Cailliau [Jan 26] at CERN in 1994, and wrote their first specification within a week or two, partly inspired by the sterling example of the X11 Windowing System [June 19]. He and Bert Bos later developed CSS into a W3C [Oct 1] Recommendation.

Lie was also responsible for the Acid2 test, a complex web page which measures a wide range of features, which he developed in response to an open letter from Bill Gates [Oct 28] about interoperability.

In 2006, he started campaigning for browsers to support downloadable web fonts. Five years later, all the major browser vendors had implemented them.

Lie also finds time to be active in the political and civic domains. He has campaigned against high-rise buildings and advertising in public spaces, and is a politician for Norway's "Pirate Party". In his spare time, he maintains a woodworking studio, and runs an organic farm.

The Invasion of Privacy

July 26-28, 1966

In 1965, after four years of detailed deliberation, the "Committee on the Preservation and Use of Economic Data" (popularly referred to as the "Ruggles Committee" after Charles Ruggles, the Yale economist who chaired the group) recommended the establishment of a Federal Data Center.

The government sprang into action, creating a Special Subcommittee on "The Invasion of Privacy", which held hearings starting on this day.

One interesting, almost amusing, revelation was that the proponents of the center were unable to explain the difference between a national data center and a "total information system" that could be used to compile "dossier"s on individuals.

One witness, author and sociologist Vance Packard, said: "My own hunch is that Big Brother [June 8], if he ever comes to these United States, may turn out to be not a greedy power seeker, but rather a relentless bureaucrat obsessed with efficiency."

Paul Baran [April 29] was also a witness, becoming the first computer scientist to testify to Congress on the threats to privacy occasioned by computers. He was invited to speak because of his 1965 keynote speech about the issue at the Fall Joint Computer Conference [June 15].

OS 8

July 26, 1997

Apple released OS 8 for the Macintosh [Jan 24], containing useful, if rather uninspiring new features such as improved Internet integration, and a multi-threaded Finder. At least it was something, as opposed to the long-promised Copland OS [May 8], which had proved overly ambitious, and had been cancelled in August 1996.

Perhaps most importantly, by calling the update OS 8, rather than OS 7.7, Steve Jobs [Feb 24] could activate a clause in the Mac clones agreement [Dec 16] that specified that it only applied to System 7. In other words, OS 8 would not need to be shared with the licensees.

OS 8 sold 1.25 million copies in less than two weeks despite (or perhaps because of) Apple's refusal to allow other companies to use the system.

Sysmas

July 26, 2019;

The last Friday in July

SysAdmin Appreciation Day (Sysmas) gives grateful users the opportunity to show their appreciation for the hard work done by their sysadmins. It was created by a sysadmin, Ted Kekatos, in 2000.

Kekatos was inspired by a Hewlett-Packard magazine advert in which a sysadmin was presented with flowers and fruit-baskets by co-workers as thanks for installing their new printers. Kekatos had just installed several of those printers at his workplace, and he hadn't received any flowers, let alone a bunch of bananas.



Sysmas Cake featuring Tux [May 9] (2005). Photo by Derphilipp. CC BY-SA 3.0.

The holiday has since been recognized and promoted by many IT organizations. For instance, since 2006, the "All-Russia System Administrator Gathering" has been held annually near Kaluga city at its renowned Keyboard Monument [Oct 5]. The event includes several joyous sysadmin competitions, including long-distance throwing of PC mice into computer cases, and the powerlifting of bundles of hard drives.