

June 25th

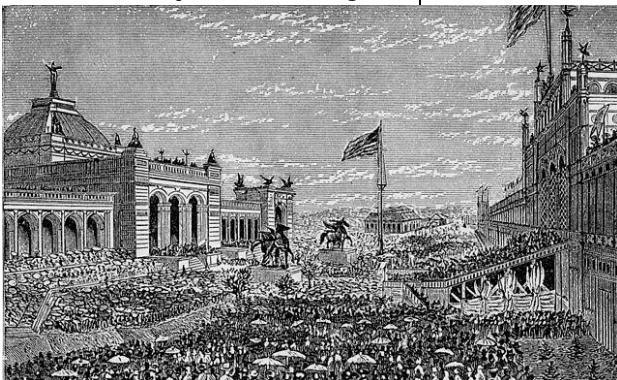
Bell's Public Telephone June 25, 1876

Prev: [March 10] Next: [Oct 9]

Alexander Graham Bell gave the first public demonstration of his telephone [March 7] during Philadelphia's Centennial Exhibition in the huge 558,000-square-foot Machinery Hall. At one end of the auditorium, a member of the public was instructed to speak normally into a large horn, and amazingly his words were emitted from a speaker at the other end of the chamber, clear as day. The awards jury included Sir William Thomson [July 20] and Dom Pedro, emperor of Brazil, who exclaimed (so legend has it), 'My God, it talks!'

The exhibition, the first World's Fair, was held between May and Nov. to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. It featured more than 30,000 exhibitors located in 190 buildings on a 256-acre site in Fairmount Park. Almost ten million visitors attended when the US's total population was just 46 million.

It was one of three great 19th century World's Fairs; the others being the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition in London [May 1] and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago



Opening day ceremonies at the Centennial Exhibition. James D. McCabe.

[March 13].

The spectacle also featured the first public debut of Heinz ketchup, the first public display of the arm and torch of the Statue of Liberty, and the premiere of the Remington Typographic Machine (the first commercially successful typewriter [July 23]).

PL/I June 25, 1964

IBM wanted a single programming language suitable for all users, preferably some pleasing combination of ALGOL [Jan 11], FORTRAN [Feb 26], and COBOL [April 8]. A committee was formed in Oct. 1963 composed of three IBMers from NYC and three members of SHARE [Aug 22] the IBM scientific users group.

PL/I (with a Roman numeral "I") appeared in April 1964, and was presented to the SHARE Advanced Language Development Committee on this day.

In 1967, IBM's Vienna lab began a project to mathematically specify the language, which led to VDM (the Vienna Development Method), one of the first large scale formal methods for defining computer-based systems.

IBM continued to promote PL/I throughout the early 1970's, regularly publishing improved versions. This persuaded the

Multics project [Nov 30] to implement parts of its OS using a subset of PL/I. One outcome was a tongue-in-cheek description of the language included in the UNIX fortune command:

"Speaking as someone who has delved into the intricacies of PL/I, I am sure that only Real Men could have written such a

machine-hogging, cycle-grabbing, all-encompassing monster" [June 00].

First Global Satellite TV Program June 25, 1967

"Our World" was the first live, international, satellite TV show. It was transmitted to 31 countries, reaching an audience of between 400 and 700 million people. The program was conceived by BBC producer Aubrey Singer, took ten months to organize, and involved 10,000 technicians, producers, and interpreters.

The artists included The Beatles [Oct 8], Maria Callas, and Pablo Picasso. The Beatles performed "All You Need is Love" which was composed especially for the occasion. However, Eastern Bloc countries withdrew at the last moment, to protest the Western nations' response to the Six-Day War (June 5 - 10).

The program began by visiting several new-born babies, starting with Japan at 4:04am, Denmark one hour before sunset at 8:06pm, 1:06pm in Mexico City, then 3,000 miles north to Edmonton in Canada.

The other famous satellite TV show of that era was Elvis' "Aloha from Hawaii via Satellite" aired on [Jan 14] 1973.

Microsoft Inc. June 25, 1981

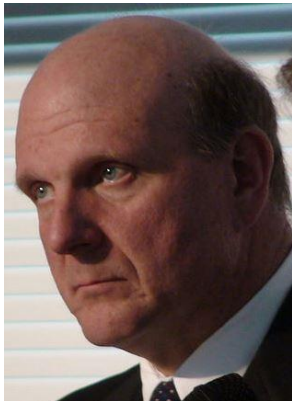
Prev: [Nov 26] Next: [March 13]

Microsoft was restructured to become incorporated in Washington state. Bill Gates [Oct 28] became President and Chairman of the Board, and Paul Allen [Jan 21] Executive Vice President.

As a private partnership, Gates had owned 64% of the company and Allen 36%. This changed so that the shareholders were now

Bill Gates (53%), Paul Allen (31%), Steve Ballmer (8%) [March 24], Vern Raburn (4%), Charles Simonyi (1.5%) [Sept 10], and Gordon Letwin (1.5%).

Raburn was an early employee at Microsoft, Lotus [Jan 26], and Symantec [Nov 7], very involved in pen computing, and ran Allen's investments at one time. Letwin is probably best known for being in the early Microsoft staff photo [Dec 7], but was also the lead architect of OS/2 [Dec 4].



Steve Ballmer. Photo by Luc Van Braekel. CC BY 2.0.

The large percentage for Ballmer, who had only joined Microsoft in 1980 as employee No. 30, may seem odd. Ballmer had cannily stipulated a valuable profit-sharing clause in his old contract, and was given the 8% in return for canceling that provision. Although Gates was happy with the deal, Allen wasn't - he didn't want Ballmer getting more than 5%. Gates ended up giving up more of his stake so Ballmer would reach 8%.

The incorporation occurred about two months before the release of the IBM PC [Aug 12] which would drastically change Microsoft fortunes.

Blade Runner

June 25, 1982

Warner Bros. released the sci-fi film "Blade Runner" directed by Ridley Scott [Jan 22] and starring Harrison Ford. The film was loosely based on the Philip

K. Dick 1968 novel "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"

Set in Los Angeles' Chinatown in Nov. 2019, Deckard is a Blade Runner, a tough police detective who hunts down and terminates artificially created humans called replicants. He's commissioned to terminate four "skin jobs," a slang term for replicants who have illegally returned to Earth.

The film introduced the Voight-Kampff Test to measure the emotional responses of humans, and distinguish them from replicants. It was inspired by Alan Turing's [Oct 00] 1950 paper where he proposed "The Imitation Game" (or Turing Test).

The inception dates of the replicants: Roy Batty (Jan. 8, 2016); Leon Kowalski (April 10, 2017); Zhora (June 12, 2016); Pris (Feb. 14, 2016 - Valentine's Day - a natural for a "pleasure model").

Windows 98

Released

June 25, 1998

Prev: [Aug 24]; Next: [Feb 17]

This version of Windows added support for multiple monitors, television tuner cards, WebTV, disk partitions greater than 2GB, the Active Desktop, and the Driver Model for components and accessories. USB [Jan 15] support was much improved, which contributed to its rapid adoption.

The system was developed under the codename Memphis, and marketed with the slogan "Works better. Plays better". Over 271,000 copies were sold on the first day. Australian Daniel Chan was the official first buyer, and received the software in a box autographed by Bill Gates [Oct 28].

Several US attorneys tried to block the release, arguing that the inclusion of Internet Explorer [Aug 16] might ruin the browser market for other

companies [March 24]. Microsoft fought back with a letter to the White House suggesting that a delay might damage the entire economy.

Paul Somerson in *PC Computing* said of the OS: "... instead of fixing the steering and the brakes and the engine, they added a bunch of chrome."

Jackson Impacts the Internet

June 25, 2009

The death of US singer Michael Jackson [not Feb 16] had a remarkably impact on the Internet, causing numerous websites to crash or slow down because of too many users.

At one point, Google mistakenly decided that it was under some kind of coordinated attack rather than suffering from millions of people searching for 'Michael Jackson'.

Twitter [March 21] crashed, as did Wikipedia [Jan 15] with the Wikimedia Foundation [June 20] later reporting that there had been nearly one million visitors to its 'Michael Jackson' article in just one hour. AOL Instant Messenger failed for 40 minutes.

Kasparov versus Turing

June 25, 2012

Chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov [Feb 10; May 11] played a match against Turochamp, a chess program developed by Alan Turing [June 23] and David Champernowne in 1948, live on stage at The University of Manchester's Alan Turing Centenary Conference.

Although Kasparov won in just 16 moves, he said afterwards: "I suppose you might call it primitive, but I would compare it to an early car - you might laugh at them but it is still an incredible achievement."

Turochamp (a combination of the authors' surnames) incorporated several move evaluation methods, and the concepts of selectivity and dead positions [Jan 00]. Its algorithms were never implemented although Turing did try to get code running on the Ferranti Mark I [Feb 12] in the early 1950's. This meant that Turing had to act as a human CPU, and the manipulation of paper slips and arithmetic meant that a move might take more than half an hour to evaluate. One such game from 1952 against Alick Glennie [June 00] resulted in a loss to Turochamp, but it had won an earlier game versus Champernowne's wife, a chess novice.

In the intervening decades, the original code and algorithms were lost, and Champernowne wasn't able to recall all the details of the game's rules. It proved impossible to reimplement Turochamp so that it behaved exactly as in the recorded game against Glennie. However, Donald Michie [Nov 11] suggested that Turing hadn't been meticulously about working out Turochamp's moves.

Other notable chess programs from the same time include:

- Konrad Zuse's [June 22] chess routines developed in the mid-1940's for Plankalkül [June 14];
- Claude Shannon's [April 30] 1950 article "Programming a Computer for Playing Chess" [Nov 8];
- Donald Michie and Shaun Wylie's program Machiavelli, which Turing unsuccessfully tried to run on the Ferranti Mark I at the same time as Turochamp.

In Nov. 1951, Dietrich Prinz, who worked at Ferranti and was inspired by Turochamp, developed the first runnable computer-based chess program [Feb 12] for the Ferranti Mark I, which could solve "mate-in-two" problems.

The End of Flash

June 25, 2017

Adobe [Oct 6] announced that from Dec. 31, 2020 it would stop supporting and updating Flash software and players [Jan 6]. There wasn't a great hullabaloo because months ahead of this end-of-life switch, Flash had already been disabled in most Web browsers, or flagged as a security risk.

After the release of the iPhone, [June 29] and other mobile devices without Flash, and the addition of video support to HTML 5 [Oct 28], much of the web had abandoned the technology. Nevertheless, it has a small but loyal following among indie animators and game developers.

Also, the Flash authoring tool remains part of Adobe Animate, and the rendering engine is included in Adobe AIR.
