

Oct. 10th

Commodore Oct. 10, 1958

In 1953, taxi driver Jack Tramiel [Dec 13] bought a shop in the Bronx where he could repair office machinery, and named it "Commodore Portable Typewriter". The story goes that Tramiel wanted a military-style name, but Admiral and General were already taken.

On this day, he incorporated the company, and in Feb. 1962 changed the name to "Commodore Business Machines" to reflect his move into adding machines, and later calculators. However, things started looking bleak in 1975 when Texas Instruments [Oct 1], the main supplier of calculator parts, entered the market directly by releasing a line of machines priced less than Commodore's costs for parts.

Tramiel decided that Commodore could only compete by integrating vertically downward into the calculator chip business. He bought MOS Technology [Sept 9], making sure that MOS's Chuck Peddle [Nov 25] joined Commodore as head of engineering.

Peddle convinced Tramiel that calculators were a dead end, and that they should turn their attention to home computers. The results were the wildly successful Commodore PET 2001 [April 15], the VIC-20 [May 00], and the Commodore 64 [Jan 7].

In 1983, Tramiel cut the prices of the VIC-20 and Commodore 64 dramatically in an aggressive bid for market share, starting what would later be called the "home computers war". But Commodore was in a good position to win, with sales of \$49 million, making it one of the world's largest PC manufacturers.

Unfortunately, the working relationship between Tramiel

and Irving Gould [Sept 26], Commodore's board chairman, suddenly fell apart, and Tramiel abruptly quit the company he had founded [Jan 16].

Gould and Medhi Ali, Commodore's managing director from 1989, made a series of business mistakes, including the mis-marketing of the Amiga 1000 [July 23], and Commodore went out of business in April 1994.

CSS

Oct. 10, 1994

Håkon Wium Lie presented "Cascading HTML style sheets – a proposal" at the "Mosaic and the Web" conference.

Several other style sheet languages were proposed at around the same time, including Bert Bos' Stream-based Style Sheet Proposal (SSP), and Lie and Bos began working together to develop the Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) standard, which they released in 1995. The 'H' was missing from the name because CSS could be applied to other languages besides HTML.

The CSS specification is currently maintained by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C [Oct 1]). Past problems with browsers' patchy adoption of CSS has led to the W3C revising the standard a few times. CSS4 is currently split into over 50 modules.

A Day in the Life of Cyberspace

Oct. 10, 1995

MIT's Media Lab set out to chronicle today's Web through its "A Day in the Life of Cyberspace" project. The stated aim was to "create a mosaic of life at the dawn of the digital revolution that is transforming our planet," and also to celebrate the Media Lab's tenth anniversary. The website was

set up at <http://www.1010.org/>, but that's long gone. However, there are screenshots of it at https://www.media.mit.edu/events/1010/1010_intro.html

The Media Lab was founded by Nicholas Negroponte [Dec 1] and MIT's then-president, Jerome Wiesner. Negroponte was director until 2000, followed by Walter Bender (2000–2006), Frank Moss (2006–2011), and Joi Ito (2011–2019). Currently the directorial position is vacant.



Screenshot of "A Day in the Life of Cyberspace", MIT Media Lab. 2019.

Neil Gershenfeld, from the Information and Entertainment section, once explained the lab's guiding role to be: "a do tank, not a think tank."

A strangely similar event called "24 Hours in Cyberspace" was organized at around the same time ([Feb 8] 1996) by photographer Rick Smolan. Smolan had been involved with "A Day in the Life of Cyberspace" as a consultant for nearly five months before resigning after saying that there wasn't enough time to do the job right.

Taliban Virus

Oct. 10, 2001

The Taliban virus was delivered in an e-mail containing the following message:

DEAR RECEIVER

You have just received a Taliban virus. Since we are not so technologically advanced in Afghanistan, this is a MANUAL virus. Please delete all the files on your hard disk yourself and send this mail to everyone you know.

Thank you very much for helping me.

Talibanian hacker

It is similar in style (and humor) to the Amish (June 13, 2001) and County Kerry (June 30, 2000) viruses.

VK Launched

Oct. 10, 2006

VK (Russian: ВКонтакте, meaning InContact) is one of the largest European social networking service, and is especially popular among Russian speakers. As of April 2020, VK had nearly 600 million user accounts.

Founder Pavel Durov was dismissed as CEO in April 2014 after he was not allowed to retract a prank (according to him) April Fools letter of resignation. Durov later claimed that VK had been taken over by allies of Vladimir Putin.

On Sept. 16, 2014, Mail.ru, a Russian Internet company, bought the remaining 48% stake of VK, becoming its sole proprietor.

Most Profane Game Released

Oct. 10, 2006

The Guinness World Records named "Scarface: The World is Yours" as the video game with the greatest number of instances of the 'f-word': 5,688 times throughout its 31,000 lines of dialogue. Despite this the game was a commercial success, selling over one and a half million units.

The game was not an adaptation of the 1983 "Scarface" film directed by Brian De Palma, but a pseudo-sequel. However, Oliver Stone, the movie's screenwriter, had been asked if he wanted to work on the game's script. When Stone declined, Radical Entertainment approached David McKenna, writer of "American History X" (1998) and "Blow" (2001). McKenna later said of the experience: "It was a pain in the ass! I didn't know what I was getting myself into."

Forbidden City Online

Oct. 10, 2008

IBM launched an online interactive virtual model of China's Forbidden City. A user could choose an avatar, dress up in period robes, take tours, play Go, learn cricket fighting, and try out archery. Sadly the site now appears to be defunct, but there is a making-of video on Youtube.



Screenshot of "The Forbidden City: Beyond Space and Time", mobygames.com, Contributed by Sciere.

It was the result of a three year, \$3 million, collaboration between IBM and the Palace Museum (the Chinese government branch in charge of the Forbidden City). The model was built using the Torque gaming platform from Garage Games.

Although the palace was built in the early 15th century by the Ming Dynasty, the virtual version was based on the Forbidden City as it exists today.

It first opened as a museum on this day in 1925, and was one of the world's busiest tourist destinations (until COVID-19 struck), limiting daily visitors numbers to 80,000.

Dart

Oct. 10, 2011

The Dart language was unveiled at the GOTO conference in Aarhus, Denmark by its designers, Lars Bak and Kasper Lund from Google.

Dart is object-oriented with a C# like syntax [July 15] which can be translated down into JavaScript [July 4] so it can run inside web browsers (in a similar way to Microsoft's TypeScript [Dec 2] and Jeremy Ashkenas' CoffeeScript [Dec 24]). It also includes Flutter, a UI framework for building iOS and Android applications.

Both the Google AdWords [Oct 23] and AdSense [June 18] teams (which drive most of Google's revenue) use Dart to write their web apps.