

In the early days of the Internet,
I don't think anybody really had an idea how big it was going to be.

-John Markoff,
February 2013

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It's hard to miss it, even among the throngs of tourists, the giant flat screens and flashing lights of next-door Times Square. The *New York Times* Building stretches upwards in the Manhattan skyline, 52 stories of ceramic, luminescent rods surrounding its glass and steel inner shell. It's radiant when the sun sets, reflective when the city lights are shining. Transparent from the outside in. Sleek and o

When the new building was unveiled in 2007, architecture critics made much of its

growing staff. Less than a decade later, their printing locations were peppered across the country, as technological changes brought on cheaper, mechanized print methods.

authority, and a pioneer in the new age of journalism. At the same time, it launched an

had been reporting on those subjects for the *New York Times*

destinations.

these developments; The *New York Times* was a different story. How could it adequately

Eisenhower, in 1919, had spent a grueling two months traversing the United States on the Lincoln Highway as part of the Transcontinental Motor Convoy. The project was instituted, in part, to show the need for an int

transportation on Eisenhower's highways. Information in America, which once traveled at the speed of our fastest transportation, now seemed to travel at the speed of light. Even the maps of highways and Internet

had been the first news source to adopt the telegraph in 1846, announced that it would begin using the Internet to transmit wire reports.

Gwertzman, a veteran foreign reporter, was not the most likely candidate for the job. Growing up in the heyday of print culture, he had occupied the storied newsrooms of the 1950s, where articles were clacked out feverishly on typewriters, newsboys yelled “Copy!,” and all hung under the grey eaves of cigarette smoke. (Gwertzman occasionally puffed on a pipe.) The *Times* hired him in 1968, where he covered the Soviet Union, followed Henry Kissinger through the Middle East, and eventually returned to the Times Square office to become Foreign Editor. (Our conversation, at one point, was interrupted as someone popped their head into the doorway. “Kissinger’s going to be in town next week. You should try and get ahold of him.” “Maybe I’ll do that!”)

But sometime in 1993, just before Markoff published “A Free and Simple Computer

had some of the same early qualities of networked computers. Nothing shows it better than the 1977 camp film, *Smokey and the Bandit*, starring Burt Reynolds as a renegade

world showed up. It was a place that looked startlingly similar to the ephemeral media of the 19th century– a mode the *New York Times* had consciously rejected – but it sold well amongst a wide audience, just like those penny papers. The Internet

In mid-1995, the *Times* contacted Peter Lewis. Gwertzman had submitted a memo of other newspapers that had gone online to the higher-ups, not wanting to be usurped by the tiny Palo Alto Weekly, who had gone online in The paper commissioned a report by McKinsey and Company to assess whether it was wise to go online. The advice? Online journalism did not necessarily pose the biggest threat to the paper – but the *Times* should get a website (tin0 0 !rotecget) -72 (t()] TJ ET Q q 0.2400000 0 0 0.240000259.16690 570.96 n

would see the story on the news wires immediately. They would rush from their desks,

It is speckled with grime as if
Small print overspread it,
The news of a day I've forgotten --
If I ever read it.

The debut of the website, though, imposed its own timing. Publication was not restricted

What the FBI reporter and the other writers in the room that day feared, then, was a logical thought for *Times* reporters well-adjusted to the rules of the competitive newspaper game

Over the course of 1996, most of America's major newspapers would go online. The *Chicago Tribune* site went live in March; *The Los Angeles Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* joined in April, the *Miami Herald* and the *Washington Post* in June, and *New York Daily News* in October. An article, "Commitments, and Questions, on Electronic Newspapers," published in the *Times* in February of that year would summarize the panicked ethos that plagued the newspaper as the industry heavyweights began a mad-dash to go online:

What drives this rush is "fear and greed," said John F. Kelsey 3d of the Kelsey Group, an electronic media consulting firm in Princeton, N.J. 0.2400000 0 0 0.2400000 178.6582

information, with a website, had not merged seamlessly into the digital world; at best, they had only staked out territory in a strange and foreign land.

The clash of the digital world and the printed press

internally, picked up an intern from the University of Missouri Journalism School, hired another young woman from Duk3 (w 0 53f(inung) -(aung) -10friend'sung) -10recommendation.ung a

