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**A Brief History of the Internet and Discernment of Various Websites**

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# **Introduction**

In this document topics such as the history of the Internet will be discussed briefly including the development of the Internet and the progressive route taken by this world changing technology, in addition various popular websites will be observed through different chronological stages and assessed using numerous well stated guidelines.

It is to be noted that all observations and discernment found in this document is a subjective opinion of the author based on personal experience gained from the informal interaction with the websites and by no means to be taken as a professional critique directed at the websites and affiliated companies. The last point to be addressed in this document is the enumeration of websites grouped in their respective categories. a few examples from each category have been selected to be observed for changes on different years from web archives.

# **The Brief History of the Internet**

The Web was born in a particle physics laboratory in Geneva, Switzerland in 1989. A computer specialist named Tim Berners-Lee first proposed a system of information management that used a “hypertext” process to link related documents over a network. He and his partner, Robert Caillou, created a prototype and released it for review. For the first several years, web pages were text-only. This limited the evolution and spread of the internet to major universities for the purpose of sharing research information funded by the military the interconnection between universities was achieved for such reasons up to 1992, the world had only about 50 web servers, total.

The acceleration to the Web’s popularity came after 1992 when the first graphical browser (NCSA Mosaic) was introduced, and the Web broke out of the realm of scientific research into mass media. 1995 is often considered the first year the web became commercialized. While there were commercial enterprises online prior to ’95, there were a few key developments that happened that year. First, Secure Sockets Layer encryption was developed by Netscape, making it safer to conduct financial transactions (like credit card payments) online. Second Google went live in 1998, revolutionizing the way in which people find information online. The ongoing development of web technologies is overseen by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

# **Chronological Progress of 5 popular websites**

**Forbes**

Is an American business magazine. Published bi-weekly, it features original articles on finance, industry, investing, and marketing topics. *Forbes* also reports on related subjects such as technology, communications, science, politics, and law.

While going through the Forbes website chronologically major aesthetical changes appeared starting from 2009. Prior to this year the Forbes website focused on the actual content itself rather than the presentation side. for the majority of the interval between 2003 - 2009 the user experience was like reading a regular newspaper. In addition, instead of getting relevant information through various mechanism (later introduced in the website) the user was forced to sift through the information by themselves. Starting from 2012 major aesthetical improvements started to appear. The interaction became more attention grabbing. After 2014 besides the exponential improvement of aesthetical aspect of the website which is clearly noticeable year after year additional features were introduced such as the content view sorter which basically sorts news based on the number of views it acquired this granted a visitor of the website to see popular news first.

At present time the Forbs website is personally amongst the best website for news it provides reliable content with various categories making it easier to read and it is very captivating the way the content is presented.

**Shutter stock**

Shutterstock is an American provider of stock photography, stock footage, stock music, and editing tools.

The original website deployed consisted 30,000 photos taken by the creator of the website and offered the right to use the pictures for a monthly subscription. But the preceding years helped the website to morph into one of the largest sites to find stock images without royalty fee. the website progressed very effectively throughout the years. Changes ranging from improvement of the overall interaction with user and very beautiful web layout to adding functions were made. Among the newest edition of the web site regarding functionality include shutter stock editor which allows users to edit picture on the website, file converter, image resizer, collage maker and several other features that enhance the functions of the website. Shutter stock also added more content to the site on 2011 called shutter stock apps which allows user for a variety of content.

Overall this website provides users with engaging content and robust functionality which mark the sign of great website.

**Rotten tomatoes**

Is an American review-aggregation website for film and television. The company was launched in August 1998 by three undergraduate students at the University of California, Berkeley:

The website started out as basic web page listing movies paired with percentage review it had a very bright green background which was not aesthetically inviting but as the years progressed it has been improved at its current state i.e. 2020 the web layout is significantly improved but personally it still doesn’t set the example for beautiful layouts with plain backgrounds of few colors and limited features. In terms of content I believed it has achieved the initial purpose of the website but since the scoop is to rate movie users can’t except variety. Regarding the concept of authority, the movie ratings are done by fans so there might not be a particular person to hold in authoritative position when it comes to the ratings of movies. In terms of purpose the website has achieved its purpose to a satisfying degree. Over all it can be regarded as a good source of review aggregating website.

**YouTube**

YouTube is an American video-sharing platform headquartered in San Bruno, California. Three former PayPal employees—Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim—created the service in February 2005.

The website started as plain page with videos shown in a listed manner. As most websites during its start the platform mainly brought new idea instead of the presentation side.as the years progressed the platform got exponentially better at the aesthetic representation of the videos with thumbnails and previews as the user hovers over the videos. the incorporation of powerful content suggestion algorithms shows the significant improvement of the users experience as videos tailored to an individual are provided. in terms of functionality YouTube has added many features to the websites like live streaming of videos music instead of simply being a video archive. Sorting videos in playlist, also support of streaming while browsing the site for other videos. overall throughout the years it is apparent that YouTube has revolutionized the mass media technology and fundamentally changed the way that humans share information on the internet.

**Upwork**

Upwork, formerly Elance-oDesk, is a global freelancing platform where businesses and independent professionals connect and collaborate remotely. In 2015, Elance-oDesk was rebranded as Upwork.

Among the various websites reviewed in this document this is by far one of the most aesthetically pleasing websites developed starting from its infancy ages. The 2015 version is really captivating and informative. The purposefulness that greats the user from the landing page is really impressive. The guides ranging from the introduction to the website’s layout to the services provided are provided in a simple yet very descriptive manner which enable a user to get started immediately. In the short 4 years the website has developed new feature and functionalities as well as added new content which can provide users with various options and services without leaving the websites.

# **Web Categories and Their Respective Examples**

## **3.1 Portal**

1. **Grants – Gov**: - the mission of Grants.gov is to allow applicants for federal grants to apply for and manage grant funds online through a common website. <https://www.liferay.com/resource/grants-gov>
2. **Addis Ababa Institute of Technology portal**: - <https://portal.aait.edu.et>
3. **Portal for the council of Europe**- the portal allows users to manage content across these sites and has improved internal communication between the programs as well as management over projects that include other organizations. <https://www.liferay.com/resource/council-of-europe>
4. **AvMed**: - was able to create unique user portals with a single sign on, helping to serve a wide variety of content to unique users quickly and in a single location. <https://www.liferay.com/resource/avmed>
5. **Britam**: - a financial advisor portal, a customer service portal and a partner service portal on a single platform. <https://www.liferay.com/resource/britam>

## **3.2 News**

1. **CNN** is an American news-based pay television channel owned by AT&T's Warner Media. <https://edition.cnn.com/>
2. **Fox News** is an American conservative cable television news channel. <https://www.foxnews.com/>
3. **BBC News** is a British free-to-air television news channel. It was launched as BBC News on November 9, 1997. <https://www.bbc.com/news>
4. The **New York Times** is an American newspaper based in New York City with worldwide influence and readership. Founded in 1851. <https://www.nytimes.com/>
5. **The Guardian** is a British daily newspaper. It was founded in 1821 as The Manchester Guardian, and changed its name in 1959. <https://www.theguardian.com/internationa>

## **3.3 Information**

1. **The Verge** is a popular technology blog for tech lovers which are mainly interested in reading tech news, product reviews and products information etc. Also, it shares interesting guides about the technology and how it affects the society. <https://www.theverge.com/>
2. **Tech Crunch** is considered as one of the well-known websites for providing quality information related to new gadgets and technology news. <https://techcrunch.com/>
3. **The Next Web** is a blog which provides technology information on the daily basis to internet users. Mostly it covers guides and topics related to business, culture and technology. <https://thenextweb.com/>
4. **Wired.com** is amongst the popular media on the internet providing news related to latest trends of technology. Also, it publishes helpful guides related to latest or upcoming gadgets, science, entertainment, business and design etc.  <https://www.wired.com/>
5. **Droid-life** has the biggest Android community in the world. They talk general news, feature apps, review phones. <https://www.droid-life.com/>

## **3.4 Business/marketing**

1. **CNN** <https://edition.cnn.com/business>
2. **Google finance** <https://www.google.com/finance>
3. **Forbes** <https://www.forbes.com/>
4. **Business inside** <https://www.pulselive.co.ke/bi?r=US&IR=T>
5. **Bloomberg** <https://www.bloomberg.com/africa>

## **3.5 Educational**

1. **EdX**: is an online learning destination offering high-quality courses from the world's best universities and institutions to learners. <http://www.edx.org/>
2. **Coursera**: It is a user-friendly website. Students can find big universities and a sharable electronic Course Certificate. <https://www.coursera.org/>
3. **Khan Academy**: is an online coaching website. <https://www.khanacademy.org/>
4. **Cosmo Learning:** <http://www.cosmolearning.com/>
5. **How cast:** <http://www.howcast.com/>

## **3.6 Entertainment**

1. **Netflix** is the world’s leading Internet television network <http://www.netflix.com/>
2. **YouTube** <https://www.youtube.com/>
3. **Rotten Tomatoes** is a website devoted to **reviews, information, and news of films,** widely known as a film review aggregator. <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/>
4. **Pogo.com is a great place to play free online games**, including puzzle games, word games, card games, and board games. <http://www.pogo.com/>
5. The **Rolling Stone magazine** is one of the most esteemed establishment in the music world. <http://www.rollingstone.com/music>

## **3.7 Advocacy**

1. **Amnesty International** <http://www.amnesty.org>
2. **Endangered Species Coalition** <http://www.stopextinction.org/>
3. **World Wildlife Fund** <http://www.panda.org>
4. **Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund Inc**. <http://www.dredf.org/>
5. **Nature Conservancy** <http://nature.org>

## **3.8 Blog**

1. Meet **Gary Vaynerchuk** @[GaryVaynerchuk.com](http://garyvaynerchuk.com/)
2. Meet **Harvey Levin** @[TMZ.com](https://tmz.com/)
3. Meet **Tim Ferriss** @[Fourhourworkweek.com/blog](http://www.fourhourworkweek.com/blog/)
4. Meet **Pat Flynn** @[SmartPassiveIncome.com](http://smartpassiveincome.com/)
5. Meet **Michael Arrington** @[TechCrunch.com](http://techcrunch.com/)

## **3.9 Wiki**

1. **Wikipedia.org** <https://www.wikipedia.org/>
2. **Gamepedia** <https://www.gamepedia.com/>
3. **Wiki books** <https://www.wikibooks.org/>
4. **Fact Monster** <https://www.factmonster.com/>
5. **Giant Bomb** https://www.giantbomb.com/

## **3.10 Social network**

1. **Facebook** <http://www.facebook.com/>
2. **Instagram** <http://www.instagram.com/>
3. **Twitter** <http://twitter.com/>
4. **Linkedln**  <http://www.linkedin.com/>
5. **Pintrest** <http://pinterest.com/>

## **3.11 Content aggregator**

1. **Google News** is a powerful news aggregator powered by Google <https://news.google.com/>
2. **Panda** aggregates content useful to web designers, developers, and tech entrepreneurs. <https://usepanda.com/app/>
3. **Flip board** is an excellent blog aggregator site that allows you to create your own content feed based on your interests. <https://flipboard.com/>
4. **Tec meme** is a tech news aggregator website. It covers top stories about technology from various reliable sources like TechCrunch, Wired, New York Times, and more. <https://www.techmeme.com/>
5. **News360** is one of the most popular news aggregator websites on the internet. <https://news360.com/>

## **3.12 Personal**

1. Personal website of **Robby Leonardi** <http://www.rleonardi.com/>
2. Personal website of **Devon Stank** <https://www.devonstank.com/>
3. Personal website if **Samuel reed** <http://strml.net/>
4. Personal website of **Kendra Schaefer** <http://www.kendraschaefer.com/blog/>
5. Personal website of **Melanie Daveid** <http://melaniedaveid.com/>

# **Guidelines for evaluating websites**

**Accuracy**

This criterion refers to the aspect of the websites content accuracy. Evaluating a web site for accuracy consists:

* Reliability: checking if the author affiliated is known, or from a respectable institution.
* References: checking if statistics and other factual information receive proper references to their origin.
* Checking if the information is comparable to other sites on the same topic.
* Checking if a bibliography or reference list included.
* Checking if the site follows basic rules of grammar, spelling and composition to covey the intended message.
* Does the website put logical reason when stating opinions?

**Authorship**

Reveals that the person, institution or agency responsible for a site has the qualifications and knowledge to do so. Evaluating a web site for authority

* It should be clear who developed the site.
* Contact information should be clearly provided: e-mail address, snail mail address, phone number.
* Credentials: the author should state qualifications, credentials, or personal background that gives them authority to present information.
* Check to see if the site supported by an organization or a commercial body

**Purpose**

The purpose of the information presented in the site should be clear. Some sites are meant to inform, persuade, state an opinion, entertain, or parody something or someone. Evaluating a web site for purpose includes:

* Checking if the content supports the purpose of the site.
* Checking if the information is geared to a specific audience.
* Checking if the outside links appropriate for the site.
* Checking if the site is organized and focused.

**Currency**

Currency of the site refers to how current the information presented is, and how often the site is updated or maintained. Evaluating a web site for currency involves:

* finding the date when the website was first developed and deployed
* It also involves checking if the author continuously revises the web content and links
* Check if the Links provided are reliable. Dead links or references to sites that have moved are not useful.
* Check if the Information provided is trend related. Meaning check if the information’s usefulness is limited to a certain time period

**Objectivity**

Objectivity of the site should be clear. Objective sites present information with a minimum of bias. Evaluating a web site for objectivity consists of checking: -

* If the information is presented with a particular bias.
* If the site’s advertising conflict with the content provided by the website.
* If the site is trying to explain, inform, persuade, or sell something.

**Functionality**

Language used in messages and instructions should be clear, concise and easy to understand. The skills required to use the site's features should be appropriate for its intended audience.

**Aesthetics**

A websites design should be appropriately appealing to its intended audience. The text should be easy to read, and not cluttered with distracting graphics, fonts, and backgrounds. Checking if website is Aesthetically appropriate consists of:

* Checking if components are not obstructed by each other. Example if an image hides parts of the text content provided by the website
* Checking if the components of the website is not cluttered as to the point where it hinders easy navigation

## **Evaluation of websites based on Guidelines**

**YouTube**

**Accuracy**: in the aspect of accuracy since YouTube is a platform where individuals can put their opinions users are left on their own to examine if an information stated by someone are true or not. But since the person or channel or affiliated organization is known it is easier for users to check if information is accurate or not.

**Authority**: this criterion is fully fulfilled by YouTube since the contact information for responsible individuals of the website are clearly stated.

In terms of **currency** YouTube can be considered to be the apex leader of websites since there appears to be anew video every minute. Information is being uploaded in real time making it one of the best sites to get current information.

Regarding the aspect of **objectivity**, the website can be considered a great example since it set out to deliver a platform where individuals can share their opinions it has achieved that in a really amazing way. The only negative aspect noticed was that advertisements placed as a means of monetization for the platform can be a nuisance and sometimes be unrelated to the information a user is looking for.

Overall the website sets the standard for great websites by combining **aesthetically** pleasing layout with powerful functionalities like intelligent content suggestion, playlist features etc.

**Stack overflow**

Starting from the concept of objectivity this site can be considered the go to example since it is guided by strong rules and regulation enabling it to provide relevant information without being cluttered by irrelevant information.

Purpose of the website is to provide platform where developers interact which is achieved to a great extent. The website is purposeful to the extent where there are no ads which is really wonderful users can have uninterrupted experience.

As for the currency aspect the website’s devoted fan are updating the content constantly by the continuous engagement with the platform.

In conclusion this site can be a great example to show what a fully fledged website looks like in terms of consisting the perfect balance between all the guiding concepts.

# Reference

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