

"Why do all these people create a personal Web site?" I was wondering, while browsing through the pages of co-contestants for the 1000\$ page contest. Being unemployed, the reasons behind my own pages were plain and simple: to offer a showcase for potential employers did not seem too bad an idea. But all those others? They talk about love or about pottery, they show their artwork, tell us something about their hobbies or preferred food ... And they all have something in common: they want to communicate, to share. And that is what the Internet is all about: sharing and communication. From the original stammering Arpanet between the Universities of California, Utah, Stanford and the MIT, through the fusion with Usenet and the first wild HTTP ideas of Tim Berners-Lee at the CERN up to the first Mosaic browser by Mark Andreessen, communication has been at the heart of the system.

Starting with a broken connection after the g of "login", over written text, incorporating graphics, pictures, animation, sound, video, VoIP, videoconferencing, ... constantly making our ways and means of communication faster and richer, the Web is on it's way. By informing the world of what happened at Tien An Men or by spreading pictures of Iraqi prisoners, the Web is making the world into one virtual community, one global village. Gutenberg's printing press cleared the way for books and knowledge for everybody; the Web will clear the way for everybody to write his own, multimedia enriched book and share it with others. We can only dream of what is still to come, what will be the impact of this tremendous communication machine on society.

Of course, it is not all roses and raptures. We still have a long way to go before dreams will come true of a world where the word "stranger" does not mean anymore someone living far away in a foreign culture, but someone without an Internet connection. Lack of infrastructure, economic abuses, politics trying to gain control over networks, ... are but some of the ambushes on this path. Notwithstanding Brazil's Volkscomputer, India's Simputer or the growing success of open source software, it is still a long way to bridge the digital divide.

This is the reason why an initiative such as the 1000\$ page contest is so valuable: because it encourages people to communicate their hopes and dreams, to share their lives with the global village in which their children will be living. Not only does it encourage more Chinese students to send emails throughout the world about what happens at Tien An Men, not only does it encourage more and more anonymous American soldiers to allow pictures of torture and humiliation scenes in Iraqi prisons to spread all over the world, but it encourages people like you and me to be heard saying *"I had a dream ..."*. That is why I am glad, proud and thankful to receive this reward. Thank You.

Tolochenaz, the 14th of November 2004

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