

# ENGAGING SOCIOLOGY

## Pop Culture Technology Timeline



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How surprising to think that digital telephones, high-speed lines for computers, digitized print media, and the World Wide Web were all invented within about the past half-century, many within the last 20 years. Vinyl records, dial telephones, and VHS tapes have been surpassed by CDs, cell phones, DVDs, and streamed and downloaded movies and music. Slim laptops, iPads, and handheld computers have replaced bulky desktop computers. The following timeline shows the rapid advances of the Internet and World Wide Web in recent years; the point of this timeline is to illustrate the rapid advance of technology and the place it holds in our lives. Technology is now a primary conveyor of culture, especially pop culture.

### An Internet and World Wide Web Timeline

- 1946:** The first general-purpose computer is created, developed for military purposes.
- 1951:** The first civilian computer is created.
- 1971:** The first personal computer (PC) is launched.
- 1978:** Cellular phone service begins.
- 1982:** Invention of high-speed communications network leads to the Internet.
- 1984:** Apple's Macintosh introduces the first PC with graphics.
- 1991:** The Internet opens to commercial uses; the World Wide Web is launched.
- 1996:** Google makes its debut.

- 2002:** Amazon Web Services launched, followed in 2006 by Amazon Elastic Compute cloud.
- 2004:** Mark Zuckerberg starts Facebook while still a college student.
- 2005:** YouTube is created by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim.
- 2009:** "Killer apps," from Microsoft and Google, service delivery introduced.
- 2013:** Wristbands to collect biological data and living, breathing running shoes launched.
- 2014:** Video glasses with head-mounted display screen debut, and smartwatches connect to the Internet and smartphones.
- 2015:** Three-dimensional computer cursors and robotic exoskeletons are controlled by human thoughts.

The continuing rapid advances in technology have paralleled the development of shared pop culture in the United States and around the world, culture that is accessible to everyone. Music groups from other continents have gained audiences in the United States, with some musical groups becoming instant success stories through YouTube.

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### Engaging With Sociology

1. Identify four of the innovations that you feel are particularly significant. What are some ways in which they have impacted your life?
2. Identify three positive and three negative ways these rapid advances in technology might impact less developed parts of the world.
3. How can the spread of pop culture across the globe (a) bring different societies closer together and (b) cause tensions within and between societies?