



GODS OF GEEKDOM

DOUGLAS ENGELBART

Douglas Engelbart rates an astounding 30 on the geek scale. If you know who he is, you may as well just go out and celebrate your victory in our geekery* challenge.

In 1963, Engelbart invented the mouse—not the rodent, obviously. God, or maybe Darwin invented that. Engelbart invented the computer mouse, which is the precursor to pretty much every computer operating system that anybody uses anymore, and more importantly, the mouse is the origin of the very concept of an intuitive computer interface. You can have a point if you know that Steve Jobs was like, totally, the Moses of computers, bringing intuitive interfaces down from a mountain and giving them to the people. You get 2 points if Wozniak rings a bell, but then, on principle, you have to subtract a couple points if you don't know that Bill Gates is the nemesis of all that is good in the

world of bits and bytes. Seriously, Windows 8 is like kissing your sister. If you like it, you probably need to see a mental health professional.

Engelbart is particularly important when it comes to geekery and politics because it is the development of increasingly intuitive computer interfaces that eventually set information free on a scale and to an extent that many would argue has fundamentally changed the world. Creating interfaces that required almost no training to gain access to information, interfaces so simple that they could literally be mastered by children who still hadn't mastered the whole toilet thing, set information free. In the half century since that first mouse, we have gone from a situation where most governments strictly controlled information available to a situation where North Korea is just about the only country that still manages to hold on to near absolute controls on what information its people can access.

* I made that word up and will use it repeatedly until it ends up in the dictionary.