

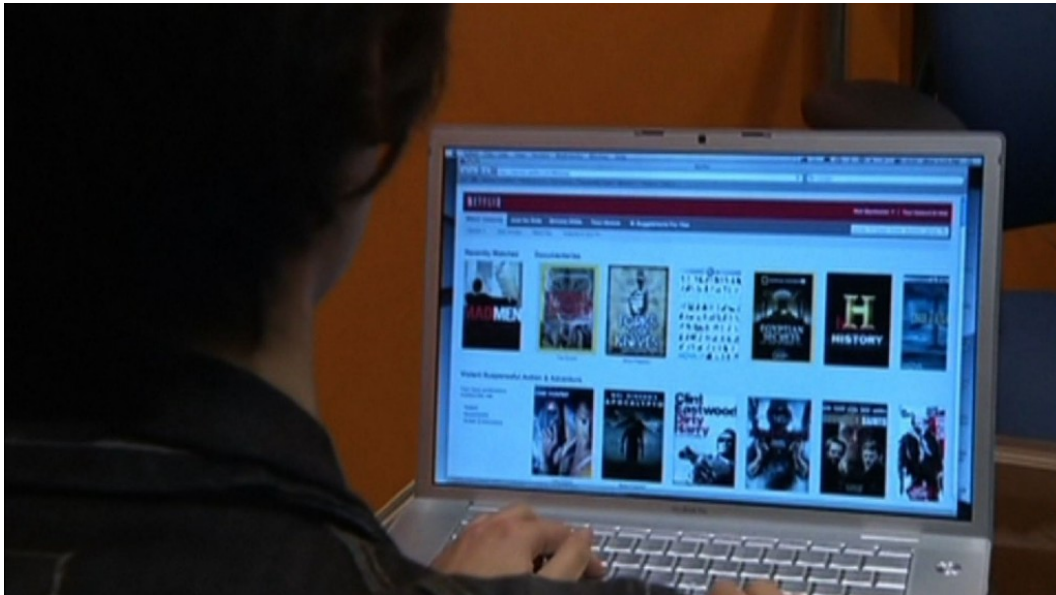


THE RUNDOWN

NATION

15 predictions for the future of the Internet

BY BRIDGET SHIRVELL March 11, 2014 at 10:54 AM EDT



The Internet has radically changed everyday life in American society. It has created new ways to connect with friends and family, disrupted the way we do business and rewired just about everything in between. But the Internet and the World Wide Web are still relatively young. [The public web is only 25](#), and like most twenty-somethings it still has a lot of growing up to do.

While debate continues on net neutrality, privacy and the architecture of the Internet, there is some agreement about the future of the Internet over the next 10 years.

As part of a series of reports marking the 25th birthday of the web, [Pew Research Center's Internet Project](#), in partnership with [Elon University's Imagining the Internet Project](#), asked nearly 1,500 Internet experts open ended questions about the [future of the web](#).

Pew Research Center and Elon University chose the experts from previous surveys, a listserv of Internet analysts and from the list of the Pew Research Center Internet Project.

The majority believes that the Internet will become like electricity during the next decade, less visible but more important and embedded in everyday life. But while the experts agreed on how Internet will continue to grow, they disagreed on the implications.

"It is striking how much consensus there is among these experts on what will change, and equally striking how

varied their answers are when they are asked how those changes will impact and influence users in good and bad ways,” Elon University Professor Janna Anderson, a primary author of the report said.

Since 2004, Pew and Elon have conducted six surveys on the future of the Internet. According to Anderson, this is the first time most of the people surveyed have described as many potential negatives as positives.

“They worry about interpersonal ethics, surveillance, terror and crime and the inevitable backlash as governments and industry try to adjust,” Anderson said.

So, what is the future of the Internet? Here are 15 predictions from the newly released [Digital Life at 2025](#):

- Information sharing over the Internet will be so effortlessly interwoven into daily life that it will become invisible, flowing like electricity, often through machine intermediaries.
- The spread of the Internet will enhance global connectivity, fostering more positive relationships among societies.
- The Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and big data will make people more aware of their world and their own behavior.
- Augmented reality and wearable devices will be implemented to monitor and give quick feedback on daily life, especially in regard to personal health.
- Political awareness and action will be facilitated and more peaceful change, and more public uprisings like the Arab Spring will emerge.
- The spread of the “Ubernet” will diminish the meaning of borders, and new “nations” of those with shared interests may emerge online and exist beyond the capacity of current nation-states to control.
- The Internet will become “the Internets” as access, systems and principles are renegotiated.
- An Internet-enabled revolution in education will spread more opportunities with less money spent on buildings and teachers.
- Dangerous divides between haves and have-nots may expand, resulting in resentment and possible violence.
- Abuses and abusers will ‘evolve and scale.’ Human nature isn’t changing; there’s laziness, bullying, stalking, stupidity, pornography, dirty tricks, crime, and the offenders will have new capacity to make life miserable for others.
- Pressured by these changes, governments and corporations will try to assert power – and at times succeed – as they invoke security and cultural norms.
- People will continue – sometimes grudgingly – to make tradeoffs favoring convenience and perceived immediate gains over privacy; and privacy will be something only the upscale will enjoy.
- Humans and their current organizations may not respond quickly enough to challenges presented by complex networks.
- Most people are not yet noticing the profound changes today’s communications networks are already bringing about; these networks will be even more disruptive in the future.
- Foresight and accurate predictions can make a difference; “The best way to predict the future is to invent it.”

That last one is more advice than a prediction.

View the full report as well as comments on each of the predictions from some of the experts at the [Pew Research Center for Internet](#).

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