**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WEB** – The Past, the Future and Everything Else In-between.

The World Wide Web is ever evolving - changing bit by bit every day. In the 27 years it has been around it has changed monumentally. From the early days at CERN; to the advent of CSS and the more recent HTML5; the internet is an ever growing and changing world in which trends in current design have become minimal and emerging design and technologies are being developed every day. The ease of access and usability of the web has also evolved to create what is now the World-Wide Web and at the centre of it is the developer and designer – the DevSigner.

The internet as it is known today [started in 1991 at CERN](http://info.cern.ch/hypertext/WWW/TheProject.html). Sir Tim Berners-Lee created the first site based off “hypermedia text”. This website revolutionised the world and has allowed millions of people to access an ever increasing amount of information. From the beginning the web was and is still written in HTML (of which there has been 5 revisions). HTML is an abbreviated form for “**H**yper **T**ext **M**arkup **L**anguage” and it allows the web to read what a page needs to say and look like. This language is one of the most important parts of the web as without it websites would not exist.

As the web evolved the next improvement was CSS (Cascading Style Sheets). This is a style sheet language allowing for the use of a set of options and variables to be set as tags for HTML documents. From the creators of CSS, “[Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) is a simple mechanism for adding style (e.g., fonts, colors, spacing) to Web documents](https://www.w3.org/Style/CSS/).”

Flash was first used in websites in the mid-nineties. It allowed designers and developers to create elaborate looking websites. The sites often featured many animated elements. These sites often had very large load times. The benefit of flash was seen for many years until 2007 when the iPhone was released. An open source alternative was needed that was much lighter and built into the basic toolset.

This open source advent was HTML5, the fifth revision of html. It featured html5 video which is now used as YouTube’s default video player. The speed increase of this light weight software means most sites now use this revision of HTML even though the current standards are still being modified. Changes were made and in 2014 the Mozilla based script was able “[to run some desktop games within a browser](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRv5ISjBd1M)”. The benefit of HTML5 is that it is a large step in the [way we use the internet](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsXEVQRaTX8). This has come about due to the ingenuity of web developers and designers and the necessity for change.

The web wouldn’t be as functional, easily accessible and linear in design if it wasn’t for the work of web Developers and Designers. Currently the web is heading in a direction with these two once different jobs becoming one. This seems to be a relief to both parties as there is a widespread adoption of minimalistic flat and material design languages. Due to advancements in web design and development this innovation and progress has allowed for the emergence of new technologies within the web.

Emergent technologies within web design are both positive and rewarding for the consumer, developer and designer. Streamlining the way web content is delivered allows the user a way to interact with a site which is personalised and free from noise. Software such as Squarespace makes creating “your own website easy” as it allows users to select from designs and templates to create a space to start an online presence. This approach means the designer and developer are still present but the way they create web material has changed to become a content provider via a library. Gamification of websites has also been gaining ground as an emergent technology by providing “achievements” which encourages a user to explore new parts of a website if a reward is offered. This experience creates a social and competitive aspect to a site which allows for users to compete (in hopefully a 'sporting manner') and therefore, become more engaged with what there is to offer.

The future trends in web are almost impossible to determine but one thing is certain. Minimalism will be around for a long time. The way we use the web is forever changing and evolving. One prediction that could be made is that material will be a big player, especially for Google services and their android division - [making material design their priority](https://www.google.com/design/spec/material-design/introduction.html). This is one of the biggest trends gaining ground at the moment and one to keep an eye on. A major future trend is 360-degree video and VR as these allow for immersive content for the web. With the race on, the next 5 years will see VR technology become more widespread, less power hungry and readily available to the general public. Whilst VR is currently on the ‘bleeding edge’, its usability is still being discovered.

With the greater availability of smartphones, more people are accessing the web directly from their phones. Responsive design allows people to effectively use the same website anywhere and anytime, streamlining the experience and making it feel the same on any device - No user should feel alienated! This is where responsive design is paramount and websites without this technology will soon loose favour in many places. Google’s material design and card layouts make a responsive website work effortlessly for both touch and mouse/keyboard.

Designing for all is one core concept of access that we cannot look past. Unfortunately, many websites don’t cater for the limited access faced by a majority of the world. Most places around the world are still using outdated technology and have limited access to hardware. A Ted talk by Margaret Gould Stewart on designing for you (and a billion others, too) goes into depth on how smaller elements can affect a website on the whole and even the smallest details are important when creating a website for the masses. People with development skills and accessibility problems are now starting to emerge as powerful advocates within the area of accessibility as they themselves, know how to design to cater towards those with a disability. A software designer Jan Blüher who during his interview on Deutsche Welle stated that he isn’t designing for the blind specifically, but allowing and developing apps for everyone so there is no barriers for an individual to gather information. The greater accessibility will allow everyone to access the web and help their voices to be heard without hindering the progress of design and bringing about new ideas and changes for the future.

As the world of the web evolves the role of developers and designers needs to expand and unite. This has coined a new ‘buzz’ word - ‘DevSigner’ - one person who both designs and develops products to allow access for more people and to design around the people, not the product. The web with the role of the DevSigner will allow the internet to become a more inclusive, seamless and interactive experience. This new role will begin the web revolution for a more accessible, future thinking and user based resource. There will be a better understanding for the needs of all stakeholders. The development of new technologies and the Devsigner will dramatically improve the web for the next generation.