

LAST WORDS

Glimpses at how technology has changed — and changed our lives.

Facebook: A new country?

Facebook, the world's largest social network, recently passed the 500-million-member mark — which is about 10 times the population of South Africa (49 million) and substantially larger than the population of Australia (21.5 million). In fact, the combined populations of Brazil (201 million) and the U.S. (310.2 million) are only slightly larger than the number of Facebook members.

SOURCES: <http://mashable.com/2010/07/21/facebook-500-million-2/>, <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/country.php>, <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/country.php>, <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/country.php>

Mobility rules.

The world of mobile computing continues to change. A recent forecast from ABI Research, a multinational global research firm, estimates that 11 million tablet computers will be sold globally by the end of 2010, and what manufacturers will ship 163 million smartbooks by 2015. Just 10 years ago the total number of computers (including PCs) in use in Europe was 154.9 million.

SOURCES: <http://www.abiresearch.com/press/16952010+Media+Tablet+Shipment+Forecast+Boosted+to+11+Million>, <http://www.abiresearch.com/press/1609-163+Million+Smartbooks+Expected+to+Ship+in+2015>, <http://www.abiresearch.com/press/16952010+Media+Tablet+Shipment+Forecast+Boosted+to+11+Million>, <http://www.c-i-a.com/pr1198.htm>

Answer to last issue's "What is this?"

The Mark I, the first programmable digital computer, built in partnership between Harvard and IBM in 1944. The machine, which weighed 5 tons, incorporated 500 miles of wire, was 8 feet tall, 51 feet long, and had a 50-foot rotating shaft running its length, turned by a 5-horsepower electric motor. **Congratulations** to Peter Jansen of the Netherlands and thank you to all of our readers who submitted answers.

1972

The release of Atari Pong revolutionizes the arcade industry and launches the modern video game era. Who could have predicted that the Ping-Pong game would spawn a \$22 billion industry?

2010

Students at the Imperial College of London create a version of Pong that can be controlled using only your eyes, making video games more accessible to the disabled. The user wears special glasses containing an infrared light and a webcam that records the movement of one eye.

SOURCES: <http://www.computerhistory.org/timeline/?year=1972>, <http://www.networkworld.com/news/2010/072810-game-changers-12-technologies-that.html?page=1>