

# In With the Old In With the New

TECH  
CONTINUES  
HELPING  
PEOPLE  
CONNECT  
ACROSS  
SPACE  
AND  
TIME.

BY RYAN SINGEL

ON JANUARY 8, 2008, THE U.S. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS UPLOADED A FEW THOUSAND COPYRIGHT-FREE HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS FROM ITS archives to Yahoo's photo-sharing site Flickr, hoping to see what the unwashed masses of Web 2.0 would do with the photos.

One of the images was a 1940s photo by Jack Delano that captured a wet street corner in a small industrial town somewhere in Massachusetts. There's a luncheonette on the corner called Sylvia Sweets Tea Room and a law office on the second floor, announced on four windows

with gold-leaf lettering.

The original title for the image was "Street in Industrial Town in Massachusetts."

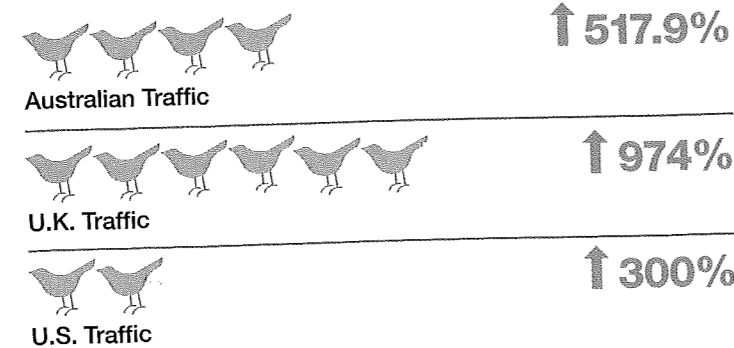
The first commenter, a user known as BiPolarLawyerCook, quickly identified the town as Brockton at School Street and Main Street. The next commenter noted its appearance in a movie poster advertising *The Thief of Baghdad*, which opened in New York in December 1940, helping to date the photo.



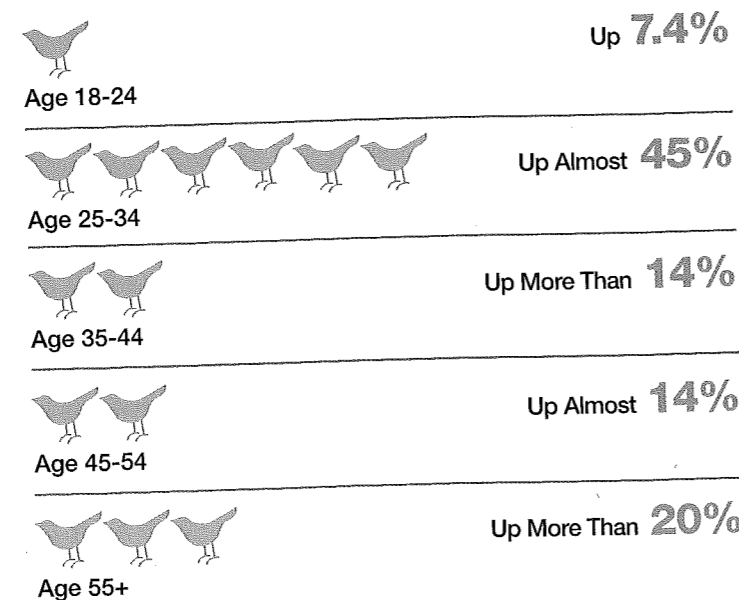
# TRACKING TWITTER'S 2008 RISE TO POWER

## IN THE PAST YEAR...

### Twitter Traffic Saw Immense Expansion



### Who's Tweeting?



### Searching The Twitterverse

Visits to the site's search page are up more than **700%**

Data taken from January 2009 Hitwise studies

Soon others chimed in, remembering the spot since the bus to Boston used to start and stop outside the Tea Room. William Wainright, an attorney, wrote to say that he watched the victory parade for professional boxer Rocky Marciano through the upstairs windows of his father George's law practice.

Then in late summer, Elaine Dayos, the daughter of the owners of Sylvia Sweets, stumbled across the picture. In the comments, she then told the story of how her Greek father had started off selling newspapers on that block, how he wouldn't let her mother speak Greek in the store and how the mahogany was replaced in the 1950s to make it into a diner.

That information—along with crowd-contributed research on more than 500 other images—has already been verified and added to the Library of Congress' catalogue, with more information just waiting to be checked and added to the nation's official photo archive.

In less than a year, the photos have drawn more than 10 million views and 7,166 comments. Users have added more than 67,000 tags. Sixteen other institutions from around the globe took note, and started sharing their photos as well, in what has developed into The Commons project.

That's the power of Web 2.0, one of the ongoing tech trends that has dominated the technology world in the last two years and which will continue to permeate the Internet and the global meeting and event industry in 2009.

### THE FUTURE IS NOW

Though the term's meaning is widely debated, Web 2.0 generally refers to Web sites that emphasize user-generated content, interactivity, collaboration and mash-ups of data and services.

While the meeting and event industry isn't on the forefront of technology, it's not too far behind, according to meeting tech experts.

The industry is fairly conservative in adopting new technologies, since planners won't take risks, especially with "mission-critical" components of a meeting, according to Corbin Ball, CMP, CSP, a prolific

writer and industry tech beacon who runs Corbin Ball Associates.

Still, Ball lists some 1,500 technology offerings on his own Web site, and notes that Web 2.0 technologies are undoubtedly industry hot spots.

"Web 2.0 is definitely taking hold," Ball said. "[For example], a year ago, there were no meeting planning rating venue sites—now there are four."

Following the model of restaurant-rating site Yelp.com, sites such as Meeting Universe and Meeting Collaborative allow users to create profiles and rate hotels and properties where they've held events. These aren't just forums to vent about an incompetent audiovisual team, they have the potential to become communities where people can speak about their experiences and gain a measure of fame inside the industry.

In fact, Nathan Torkington, a New Zealand tech trend watcher and Asia-Pacific tech consultant, says that Web 2.0 technology won the election for U.S. President Barack Obama. Obama's [my.barackobama.com](http://my.barackobama.com) was a social networking application, not unlike Facebook.

It made it simple for people to create affinity groups and self-organize. Obama had more than 1 million friends on the most popular social networking sites, and his campaign used viral videos on sites such as YouTube to reach millions of young people.

"Technology let him fire up people, and then channel their energy into productive get-out-the-vote actions," Torkington said. "I hope we'll see it trickle down to state and local elections."

Perhaps just as importantly, Obama introduced many non-techies to Web 2.0, according to Elizabeth Churchill, a long-time researcher in Silicon Valley.

"People I know who are not tech geeks were excited about looking up Obama on Flickr, even though they'd never heard of Flickr before," Churchill said. "Web 2.0 tools have moved from the domain of self-obsessed techies like me into the hands of normal people."

Meeting planners were among those

finally figuring out social networking, according to Jim Spellos, a technology trainer for the meeting industry and the president of Meeting U.

"People are getting more comfortable with social networking tools and will figure out how to integrate them into their events," he said.

That's especially true, Spellos says, for events that are more cross-generational—where event marketers try to reach Baby Boomers through traditional means and Gen X and Gen Y through new social media tools.

"We are entering a time in which e-mail is less of a choice for people as their primary communication tool," Spellos said.

New media strategist Amber MacArthur agrees that planners need to adapt.

"I don't think that it's good enough anymore to simply put people in a room and expect them to listen passively," MacArthur said.

Echoing Spellos' recommendation that Facebook and other tools be used to promote an event, MacArthur says planners need to be more proactive in their online social network involvement (see "Requested to be Your Friend," on Page 82 in the February 2009 issue of *One+*).

"At the actual event, these tools can be used to facilitate conversation among the audience and with individuals who could not make it to the event in person," MacArthur said. "Following the event, Web 2.0 technologies are an easy way to take event-related content and distribute it to a wider audience."

MacArthur predicts that meetings and conferences will get more competitive, and proper use of technology will make the difference.

"Planners who take advantage of social meeting technologies throughout the life of the conference will have better results with more engaged audiences," MacArthur said.

European organizers behind the innovative LIFT technology conference are showing the way.

LIFT participants suggest presentations and vote on the most interesting ones. Space gets allocated based on what the

THOUGH THE TERM'S MEANING IS WIDELY DEBATED, WEB 2.0 GENERALLY REFERS TO WEB SITES THAT EMPHASIZE USER-GENERATED CONTENT, INTERACTIVITY, COLLABORATION AND MASH-UPS OF DATA AND SERVICES.

## SMARTPHONE WARS

171 MILLION SOLD IN 2008

### The Race to Sell 1 Million Units



72 Days

BlackBerry Storm  
(available in U.S. and U.K. at launch)



61 Days

G1 Android  
(only available in U.S. at launch)



3 Days

iPhone 3G  
(launched in 21 countries simultaneously)



74 Days

iPhone (original)  
(only available in U.S. at launch)

## NETBOOK GROWTH

56%

Netbook sales increase in the fourth quarter 2008 versus the third quarter.

11%

Percentage of U.S. computer users using netbooks as the primary computer.

participants want.

"LIFT is totally built by user-generated content," Ball said. "It's a kind of un-conference."

LIFT now draws some of the biggest names in new technology and has seen substantial growth. The conference had more than 750 attendees in 2008, and has expanded its annual lineup from its original Geneva show to include LIFT Asia in Korea.

"In general, the Web 2.0 paradigm is increasing attendee and user input on how things are run and what is going to be said," Ball said.

But more immersive and interactive software tools won't be the only tech trend defining 2009.

### GADGETS!

Ubiquitous computing is on the rise thanks to increasingly popular gadgets.

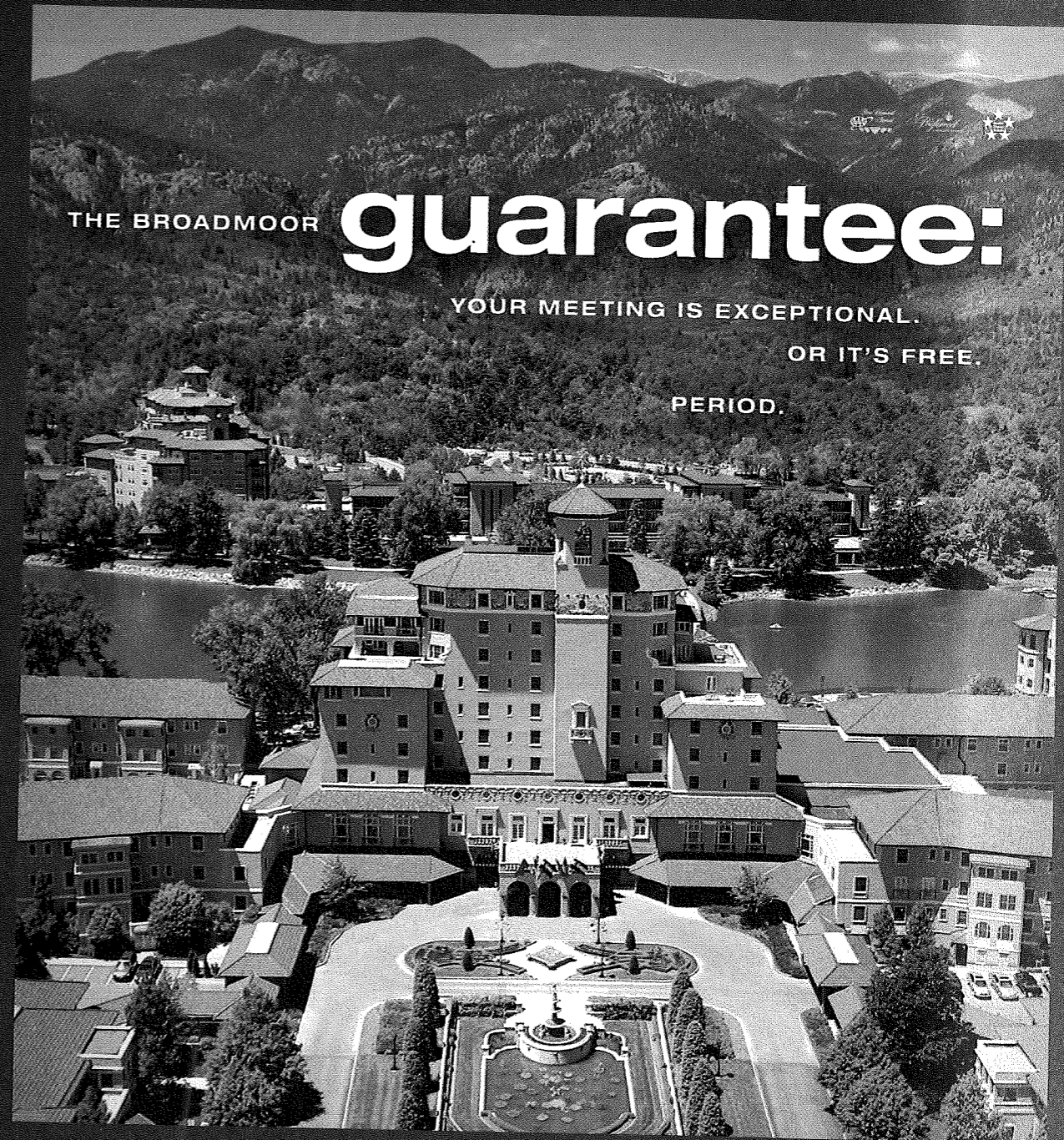
While iPhones dominated the news, a new category of notebook known as netbooks outsold the iPhone in the third quarter of 2008—5.6 million to 4.7 million.

Companies had tried for years to convince consumers they wanted a small, ultra-portable laptop, according to Boing Boing Gadget's Rob Beschizza, but companies such as Sony stuffed them with the latest and most expensive processors and memory, leaving sub-notebooks with a niche audience.

But after Asus unveiled the Eee PC, a stripped down laptop with a nine-inch screen, not much memory and a workaday processor, other laptop manufacturers came out with their own. People flocked to the Eee PC, which now costs as little as US\$250. With decreasing consumer sales demand, netbooks can be found even cheaper than that—the Acer Aspire One netbook sells for US\$99.99, with a two-year mobile broadband plan.

They are small and lightweight with batteries that last a few hours. They sport nearly full-size keyboards, connect to the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 86



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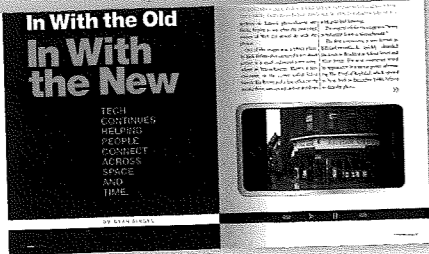
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 66

Internet via Wi-Fi and run Windows XP or Linux on 1GB of memory. Most are lighter than Apple's famed MacBook Air, and can be carried in a backpack or purse.

Netbooks dominated the top selling laptops on Amazon.com in 2008, and at the end of the year occupied every spot in the top 10, except for No. 7—that belonged to the MacBook.

"They are cheap enough that you don't worry about breaking them and you can get a half day of work out of the battery," Beschizza said. "The idea of having a laptop with you everywhere you go finally makes sense with netbooks."

That's even more true in Europe where cellular carriers are in price wars over 3G USB dongles which come standard on cheap Euro netbooks such as the Eee PC Go.

Expect this to mean that more and more event and meeting attendees will be at events with full-functioning laptops, participating in back-channel conversations, looking up information on Wikipedia in the middle of presentations and having access to the conference's Web site—and expecting updated information at all times.

Of course, the other real story in the ongoing gadgetry revolution is next-gen mobile phones, the iPhone and phones using the Android operating system. The former put smartphones in the pockets of millions of non-executives, while the latter promises to create a universal operating system that will let handset makers create an explosion of smart phones.

John McConahy, a technology consultant for the meeting and event industry and president of Ontario, Canada-based Imagination Plus Inc., says the new devices are so powerful that event planners need to take the new wave of mobile devices into account for any event.

About 10 years ago, McConahy was teaching an industry tech course—mostly

teaching planners how to use Microsoft products. A long-time Trekkie, McConahy says he started envisioning Star Trek scenarios for the future.

"I went on this whole diatribe, telling them that someday they would be able to pull out a mobile phone from their pocket and find their friends, etcetera," McConahy said. "They are all available today, but back then everyone thought I was out in left field."

Meeting U's Spellos says planners need to take advantage of phones running on 3G data connections

"You will start to see unique apps that are downloadable when event attendees get

## TWITTER QUICKLY BECAME THE BACK-CHANNEL COMMUNICATION METHOD OF CHOICE FOR TECH CONFERENCES, LETTING AUDIENCE MEMBERS QUICKLY SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS AND SNARK WITH EACH OTHER AND EVEN THOSE ON STAGE.

to the hotel," Spellos said.

As a template he points to Hotel Evolution, a downloadable iPhone app created by RunTriz.com.

The stunningly clever and obvious application lets hotel users order room service, find nearby restaurants, contact the concierge and schedule room cleaning.

Corbin Ball says he knew something had changed when he was walking in Barcelona in December and saw a construction worker put down his jackhammer and pull out an iPhone.

"The iPhone made it cool to carry around a smartphone," Ball said. "It's not just business people using these phones, but there's a big hole at events. You can get

all sorts of feedback from rich Web pages, and attendees have all sorts of tools in their pockets."

Smartphones also played a key role in the explosion of the micro-communication service Twitter, since they allowed people to quickly publish, search for and read short notes online.

In December, Nathan Torkington began getting more Twitter subscribers every three days than he did in the entire month of January 2008.

"2008 was definitely the year of Twitter," Torkington said. "Twitter feels very much like blogging did in its infancy—exciting, rapid uptake, lots of exposure to interesting voices."

Elizabeth Churchill notes that Twitter is applied to all sorts of uses.

"Twitter has been used to disseminate information in disasters and for citizen journalism in situations such as the Mumbai attacks, as well as telling friends you are about to take a shower," Churchill said.

Twitter also quickly became the back-channel communication method of choice for tech conferences, letting audience members quickly share their thoughts and snark with each other and even those on stage.

As Spellos notes, back-channel conversations at tech conferences are nothing new, but the persistence, ease and popularity of Twitter promise to make the back channel far more prominent and popular than ever before.

"It's a tool that event planners can't ignore," Spellos said.

Event managers should harness Twitter to their own advantage, using it to announce room changes, hot topics and reminders.

"It really becomes your instant update system to let people know what's next," Spellos said.

Twitter has the smell of inevitability, according to Corbin Ball.

"People are going to use these things whether you like it or not," Ball said. "Planners need to think about how to control it. One way to harness it is to ask for polls, which is one way to use it and not lose control."

Meeting planners are also likely going

to turn to tools like Pathable to harness, nurture and keep some control over cyber-social networking at events.

Pathable's technology combines event registration with social networking and recommendations. The software lets eventgoers tag themselves with their interests, send messages to everyone who lists similar interests and even shows the profiles of other attendees who you probably would like to meet, based on shared interests.

These kinds of tools will grow even more powerful when they allow people to use identity management services such as Facebook Connect and Google Friend Connect to let people quickly populate an event's social network with the pictures and interests they already have online.

At the end of an event, those same tools also let attendees import their new contacts quickly into their more permanent social networks such as LinkedIn or Facebook.

Planners will also find themselves turning to collaborative online tools this year, according to McConahy.

"The meeting and event industry will be a much more collaborative process between planner and supplier," he said.

With online documents, negotiations can happen simultaneously, letting a catering manager, sales manager, the sales director and the audiovisual crew collaboratively edit a bid in real time.

Such software interactivity is going to become even more common in 2009, as companies turn from expensive, licensed software to open-source and online software, thanks to the economic downturn, according to Torkington.

"In the downturn, cloud computing and open source are going to be big," he said. "Nobody has big budgets for software purchases and data center buildouts."

Companies such as online office tool provider Zoho and customer relations management software maker Salesforce.com will steal customers from Microsoft Office and Oracle, since a low monthly payment looks hugely attractive compared to a company-wide, big-ticket upgrade, according to Torkington.

It's those cloud software tools—also

known as Software as a Service—that also make it simple to simultaneously edit documents, share calendars and collaborate in new ways.

## IT'S YOUR TIME HAS COME

This year may see videoconferencing take off, though the technology always seems to be perpetually on the cusp.

In the downturn, however, companies may find that the latest generation of videoconferencing makes sense as a good enough replacement for expensive travel.

Proctor and Gamble has already invested significant sums into building videoconferencing rooms in order to cut down on travel expenses for internal meetings.

Meanwhile, high-end hotels such as the Taj chain have installed virtual boardrooms that connect with other boardrooms. They cost as little as US\$300 or so per hour to use, which can easily cost a company far less than sending even a single person across the globe for a two-hour meeting.

The high-definition quality of the video is quite amazing, according to McConahy,

who says that being in one of the conference rooms with huge panels on the wall makes it feel like you are in the same room, even when you are talking to a board of directors located in five different cities.

Ball notes the idea of video conferencing as a replacement for meetings is not new, but thinks there might be more adoption in 2009 in part because tech giants HP and Cisco are investing heavily in the new technology.

"The bandwidth and infrastructure are there now," Ball said. "You are going to see more use of it, especially in this economic downturn."

Ball doesn't think that video conferencing (however high-definition it is) or online tools (however hip they might be) will eclipse the power of people meeting in the same physical space together, adding that humans are social animals after all.

"Meetings are the original social media," Ball said. **one+**

RYAN SINGEL is a staff writer for **Wired.com**.

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