Inventing the Internet (Inside Technology)

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Since the late 1960s the Internet has grown from a single experimental network serving a dozen sites in the United States to a network of networks linking millions of computers worldwide. In Inventing the Internet, Janet Abbate recounts the key players and technologies that allowed the Internet to develop; but her main focus is always on the social and cultural factors that influenced the Internets design and use. The story she unfolds is an often twisting tale of collaboration and conflict among a remarkable variety of players, including government and military agencies, computer scientists in academia and industry, graduate students, telecommunications companies, standards organizations, and network users.The story starts with the early networking breakthroughs formulated in Cold War think tanks and realized in the Defense Department's creation of the ARPANET. It ends with the emergence of the Internet and its rapid and seemingly chaotic growth. Abbate looks at how academic and military influences and attitudes shaped both networks; how the usual lines between producer and user of a technology were crossed with interesting and unique results; and how later users invented their own very successful applications, such as electronic mail and the World Wide Web. She concludes that such applications continue the trend of decentralized, user-driven development that has characterized the Internet's entire history and that the key to the Internet's success has been a commitment to flexibility and diversity, both in technical design and in organizational culture.

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