

Mitchell Baker Closing Keynote
Global INET, April 24, 2012
Geneva, Switzerland

Key highlight: Baker says, “We can see today that the centralized institutions of our world are not going to solve our problems. The billions of people who are hungry are not going to be cared for by some large, centralized organization. Humans are smart and we are ingenious and given frameworks and tools for empowerment we do amazing things. This ability to create, to use those human values and to build an Internet and a framework and connectedness and an ability to create life across the planet is a tool, the Internet is a tool the likes of which we have not seen before. One key aspect of connectedness is to move to this creation piece. And looking towards the future, the single thing I can think of that is likely to be effective is to touch more people with the power of openness and the ability to connect and create.”

Video posted by ISOC on Livestream:

[http://www.livestream.com/inet1/video?clipId=pla_c8ec3f60-d9d4-45c9-af7c-ea715c5df783](http://www.livestream.com/inet1/video?clipId=pla_c8ec3f60-d9d4-45c9-af7c-<u>ea715c5df783</u>)

Baker Keynote:

It is great to be here. I also was struck by the Hall of Fame ceremony last night, which was a delight. As I listened to the inductees give their talks, each person had in theory one or two minutes, although it was a little longer, the thing that struck me the most was the idea of connectedness. And although we used other words for it, over and over again what I heard was the goal of enabling connections, as many connections as possible, connections between wildly different environments, connections between unknown and unforeseeable environments, and connections with as little friction as possible.

So I've come away with an enhanced interest and focus on this idea of connectedness as a core organizing principle.

I was also struck - Steve [Crocker] spoke about the RFC [Request for Comments] process, which had the same idea in it, which to me I hadn't known before - that that process was designed with a recognition that building connectedness and building the Internet requires a social element and that connectedness is true among machines and is also true among people.

I don't think he was speaking exactly of social media, but if we look at the phenomenon of social media, it too is about connectedness: how many connections are possible, how many peer-to-peer connections are possible, are they possible from unknown and unforeseen environments, is it possible to connect to different people with little friction?

It seems easy to nod one's head and say, “Yes, connectedness, ease of connecting, different environments, heterogeneity.” Today when we, especially among ourselves when we talk about these things, it is easy to nod our heads and say, well of course, that's obvious. But I don't think it is obvious; it probably wasn't obvious when it was created the first time around, and it is not obvious today to most people outside of our worlds.

We see that connectedness is often regulated. Access is sometimes regulated for its own sake,

or for the sake of control or for the sake of centralizing. We see that the ability to connect is regulated increasingly based on content, and increasingly we see that content and connectedness are merging.

Sometimes those regulations on content are so extreme that they start to threaten the ability to connect. We see all sorts of government regulations and censorship, and all sorts of things with well-meaning intents, but that threaten the nature of connectedness. Sometimes the ability to connect the way the Internet permits is so threatening, that governments will allow a regulation of content and expression that they never would in other aspects of life.

So we know that a repressive government that doesn't have free speech, or has extensive censorship in the print and online and broadcast media, is likely to apply the same thing to the Internet. That is tragic, but to be expected. But what we are also seeing today is governments and societies that have much more open systems for content and free expression in print looking very carefully at regulations on the online world that allow tracking and logging and censorship that would never be permitted in the world we have known to date.

That, I think, is the power of connectedness being so strong that it's forcing otherwise open societies down a more closed path than they realize.

Part of the future for us is learning how to better express the distinction between connectedness and the absolute criticality of connectedness for this world, and the fears that arise as people get connected to content. We don't have the answers yet.

It is a kind of knock-down fight right now. So we see that in government regulations over free expression. We also see regulation of content, excuse me, regulation of connectedness through content for investment and business models; net neutrality being a good example here, where the need to build infrastructure, the need to invest in infrastructure, the need to have business models around infrastructure that makes sense, lead to legislative proposals that affect the connectedness of the Internet, or proposals that one kind of content is permitted, another kind of content isn't permitted, or that you would have various channels and you might pay a certain amount and get some channel of information, but not have access to other kinds of information, so breaking up and fragmenting the connectedness of the Internet.

We also see, of course, in copyright fragmentation of connectedness as well. So this basic idea of connectedness seems obvious, but in fact I think its very power means it's facing threats today.

There is another kind of connectedness that also came out of the founding of the Internet, and that is the connectedness to create, to go beyond the connectedness to consume, and have the ability to create. The Internet is fundamentally different, as we know, from broadcast media or from cable media. This ability to create is deep in the architecture of being able to plug in at the edges and the RFC process and the standardizations process. This today is also something we have to think about really carefully. It is not obvious to the rest of the world that one of the key aspects of the Internet is the ability to create, to go beyond consumption when you want and to create. The Internet Society is doing some of this. I see it as I travel the world meeting Mozilla communities. Increasingly I'm meeting people from ISOC who are involved and who are trying to create things.

I know that the Internet Society is working on this. Mozilla is working on this, too. Our goal is to create software, create a layer of the Internet stack above the protocols that ISOC works on, but also to create communities of people who experience openness, experience connectedness and experience the joys of creating.

There is a sort of mythology that it's great to be a couch potato and sit back and everything is free, especially on the Internet. What more could you need? It turns out many people, some of the time, long to be able to create. Sometimes that is the luxury of creation, I think for those of us here, certainly, to meet one's needs. For many people though, the ability to create is the question of whether you have a chance of economic empowerment. But if you can't create, if you can't create a way to earn a living, if you can't create a little business, if you can't create the things you need in life to actually change your scope, then you are stuck on some centralized authority.

We can see today that the centralized institutions of our world are not going to solve our problems. The billions of people who are hungry are not going to be cared for by some large, centralized organization. Humans are smart and we are ingenious and given frameworks and tools for empowerment we do amazing things. This ability to create, to use those human values and to build an Internet and a framework and connectedness and an ability to create life across the planet is a tool, the Internet is a tool the likes of which we have not seen before.

One key aspect of connectedness is to move to this creation piece. And looking towards the future, the single thing I can think of that is likely to be effective is to touch more people with the power of openness and the ability to connect and create.

Making it easy for people to experience what it is when you can actually get in – ‘view source,’ as we say on the Web - actually see what makes the world, take it apart, put it back together again. There is a range of policy issues to be addressed, which ISOC is doing. There is a range of very deep technical issues to be addressed. But one key that I urge all of us, including Mozilla, which is my mission for the future with Mozilla, is create a framework in which more people experience the openness of the Internet, experience the ability to connect and the ability to create.

That means reaching outside of our communities, to the gentleman who spoke in the prior session about not talking among ourselves, there is a big piece of that. It is hard to do sometimes. The programs that we are finding inside Mozilla that are effective are different. It is not always talking to technologists. It is an effort, actually as we did with Firefox, to have a different mind-set. What is the mind-set of a consumer? What would a consumer product look like? But here, it's what are the aspects of connectedness and creation that we know something about, and that we can help at least lay possibilities for those sets of people who are eager?

It's clear when you travel the world. I sometimes go to events like this one, but I also go see Mozilla communities. Sometimes they are small, two or three or four or 20 or 30 people. But they are the core, like the Internet Society chapters, of people who can see that, “Yes, I can build. I don't need to be in Silicon Valley, don't need to work for Google I don't need to work for Mozilla. Here are tools, and here is availability, and here is someone who when I have a question will answer it. Here are some tools. Here are ways to move forward.”

Increasing numbers of people are doing their own thing to connect and to create. The Internet Society, Mozilla is doing this, there are other organizations as well. We are not expanding ourselves per se. Really. Chapters are great. Mozilla communities are great. But what is really important is the number of people who have experienced the real openness and creativity of the Web, and are using that to build a better world in their lives. Some of that will do that in a technical area and will join with what we are doing. And increasingly, if we are successful, millions of people will be experiencing that in other aspects of life, because we will not solve global problems, we will not solve employment opportunities, we will not solve the financial and environmental crises from any one centralized spot, not even here in Geneva. That has to happen on an organic basis, with lots of activities happening in different locales with people trying different things and finding things that work.

I would say that the fundamental principles that went into designing the Internet, of connectedness, not controlling who or how, not trying to foresee what happens and separating out the ability to connect from the actual content or what is actually in those packets, is as important today going forward, for the big issues of our time, as they are in designing the Internet itself.

Thank you.