Welcome to the Tiny Word Processor

Click on some text to start. Add extra pages using the 'Add Page' button at the bottom and press Ctrl+P or Cmd+P to print!

Use the Stylesheet sidebar on the left, various types of text in the document can be visual changed.

Select some text with your cursor and use the modifier buttons on the right to make text **bold**, *italic*, <u>underscored</u> or strikethrough.

A Brief History of Hypertext

The history of the internet is almost intrinsicly attached to the concept of '*Hypertext*'. The phrase, coined by Ted Nelson first in 1960s, describes the creation and linking of content together. It's impossible to talk about the history of hypertext without talking about <u>Vannevar Bush</u>'s Memex though. The Memex was a conceptual mechanical device (though never realised in any form) thought up by Bush in the mid 1940s for the saving and requesting of knowledge on demand. Though not typically considered related to the later Hypertext concepts that emerged 20 years later, the Memex is notable for being the spark that lit the flame that started the Hypertext world we live in today.



Word Processing

On December 9th 1968, Standford Research Institute's Douglas Engelbart demonstrated what has now become known as 'The Mother of All Demos'. The now famous demonstration is widely seen as the beginning point for human-computer interaction, a powerful showcase of what the future could and in many ways did end up looking like.

One of the most notable points of the demo to me was the text editing, or word processing, where in real time several people edited a document across a long distance. This demo also showcases links with an underline, pretty much exactly like we do still today (bar the blue colour, but that's another rabbit hole in and of itself.)

Ultimately, the demo didn't end up having a major impact on the computing field of the time. Engelbart was generally regarded as crazy and counter to the culture of the time. But in this case, it's not imporant to look at where the demo went, but rather where the *people* went.

"It's hard to believe now," he explains, "but at the time, even we [Engelbart's fellow researchers] had trouble understanding what he was doing. Think of everyone else out there."

- Bill Paxton to the Register Magazine in 2008 [link].



Putting the U and I in UI

Many of Engelbart's team ended up working at Xerox in the 1970s. The company was drawing in brilliant minds from across the field, even those from Nasa who helped fund Engelbart's research in the 1960s. The result was the Alto, the one of the world's first personal computers. It featured many of the hallmarks of modern computing, including a mouse and keyboard for input, a graphical user interface built around a '*desktop*' metaphor and notably for my project: it was one of the first computers to implement a "What You See Is What You Get" (WYSIWYG) Text Editor. The idea being that what you produced on the screen mapped 1:1 to what could be printing in the real world. A major concept, especially for business applications. However, the Alto or Xerox themselves are hardly remembered even within computing circles. This came down to a crucial lack of awareness from Xerox management. Much like how Douglas Engelbart's research was looked down upon, the management of Xerox failed to see just how massive the Alto was, and more importantly how big they fucked up when they let Steve Jobs walk in essentially for free and steal their golden goose, the GUI, from right under their arms.

"He (Steve Jobs) came back and I almost asked, but the truth is, demanded that his entire programming team get a demo of the Smalltalk System, and then the head of the science centre asked me to give the demo because Steve specifically asked for me to give the demo and I said no way. I had a big argument with these Xerox executives telling them that they were about to give away the kitchen sink and I said that I would only do it if I were ordered to do it 'cause then of course it would be their responsibility, and that's what they did." - Adele Goldberg, PARC Place Systems, ca. 1980

Ultimately, Steve Job's team at apple turned the Alto's interface into Apple Lisa. Since Xerox never saw the point of bringing the Alto to market, Apple were the first to mass-produce a personal computer with a GUI. The Lisa was ultimately a commerical failure, but not in vain since it set the standard of Apple and IBM computers to come. It saw the expansion of Xerox's WYSIWYG systems, and built the ideas into a full office suite of text editing. A notable point from the history of the Apple Lisa is <u>Susan Kare</u>, the graphic designer behind the iconic icons of the Lisa's OS. When working on Tiny Word Processor for this assignment, I aspired to not only create my own word processor, but to also create all of my own icons here. This was a process that added considerable time to the project, but ultimately it was work that fulfills my philosophy of bottom-up design in computing spaces.



Susan Kare

Some Brief words on HTML

It's hard to write about word processing while typing it in a website you made yourself without talking about HTML. I'd be here all day though if I went into detail. The part which interests me most however is what I'll share. Tim Berners-Lee invented HTML while working at CERN in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Originally, HTML was intended to be exactly what it said on the tin: a "Hypertext Markup Language". It's incredibly hard to find information and sources on the early versions of html and it's elements, largely because so much of the focus on html is linked to what it *would* become and how it got there. This does say a lot of the true impact of html, how it's value came from how people shaped rather than how it was conceived.

That being said, in the context of this project I think it's important to frame the purpose of HTML. If we observe it's syntax, it truly is intended as a markup language for text documents. The original goal was to facilitate the sharing of research and text documents throughout the many buildings in CERN's campus. For me, the most fascinating parts of HTML are the many depracted or forgotten features around editing. Thinks like <mark> for highlighting, or for marking text for deletion gives a glimpse into a vision for peer-editable documents that was originally envisioned for HTML.

Ultimately, I could be here all day talking about it. But without the focus on text as the framework for the modern web, I couldn't have created my own Word Processor to produce this piece of text on it's history!

https://www.w3.org/People/Raggett/book4/ch02.html