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Cover illustration
*Four steps in the simulated growth of a phylogenetic tree pro-
jected onto a two-dimensional plane. Each dot represents a
species; the ancestor is located at the root of the tree and the
living species are located on the leaves. This tree is made of
4000 living species, with the furthermost species being the most
differentiated with respect to the original ancestor, i.e., the spe-
cies which is the most "genetically different" with respect to the
"root". The vertical axis represents the number of mutations from
the ancestor; the horizontal axis is arbitrary. The growth of such
a tree involves a succession of bursts separated by periods of
stasis (Gould's so-called punctuated equilibrium) occurring on a
geological-like timescale. The tree shown here consists of about
250 bursts, where each of the various colours represents 25
successive bursts (see M. Ausloos and N. Vandewalle, p. 55).*

Developing a Presence

With 1400 participants at the second conference in
Darmstadt in April, the international World-Wide Web
conference series seems to have already reached its
limits. It will now probably start to atomise into specia-
lised events catering for heterogenous interests. In
sharp contrast to last year's first event at CERN,
numerous multinational companies participated, testi-
fying to the growing commercialisation of the Web.
Some aim to be technology leaders, taking over from
research centres (*e.g.*, Silicon Graphics is pioneering
three-dimensional browsers). Others, notably Micro-
soft, will interface the Web to their own technologies.

Another watershed came in 21 April when the rou-
ting tables for the US NSFNet were removed in the
hand-over of the US Internet backbone to commercial
operators. Aside from some support for access to
Network Access Points, the US government will now
focus on developing high-bandwidth backbones. Eu-
rope has a less structured approach based on relati-
vely monopolistic operators reaching agreement so as
to provide full coverage. The result, while expensive,
is nonetheless stable.

So the Internet is here to stay and countless organi-
zations have taken the plunge — including the EPS in
1993 when the Society began to use NIKHEF's Web
server. A more accessible server recently became
available in Lausanne and the two are now coordina-
ted under the EurophysNet umbrella (page 59).

The real challenges of course lie elsewhere.
Ensuring the development of non-proprietary solutions
remains a priority The World-Wide Web Organization,
a consortium comprising the US National Science
Foundation and NSCA (the originators of the pionee-
ring Mosaic Web browser), and the European W4G
interest group operating under the ERCIM banner are
all very active; the Internet Engineering Task Force
and the International Standards Organization also
play a role. Nonetheless, Version 3 of the Web's
Hyper Text Markup Language will emerge this sum-
mer, illustrating that an ever increasing number of
ever more sophisticated yet accessible Web tools will
become available.

Reaching agreement on ways to find a piece of data
is taking much longer. A popular approach is based on
defining metadata that includes the author's name, the
date, the context, *etc.* As the discussions are endless
much information tends to be repeated, with primary
sources seeking visibility. EPS must unfortunately
follow suite, albeit fairly modestly, and EurophysNet
should provide the necessary framework.

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