

A History of the Internet Through Sex Work



Volume 1
SANITIZED NOT SAFE

Did you know that many of the pivotal innovations that led to the development of the internet as we know it were developed (sometimes unknowingly and uncredited) championed by sex workers, adult content creators, models and performers?






In the 1990s and early 2000s,
sex workers and adult performers

shifted
their services
online and
gained
greater

CONTROL 
over their
working
conditions.

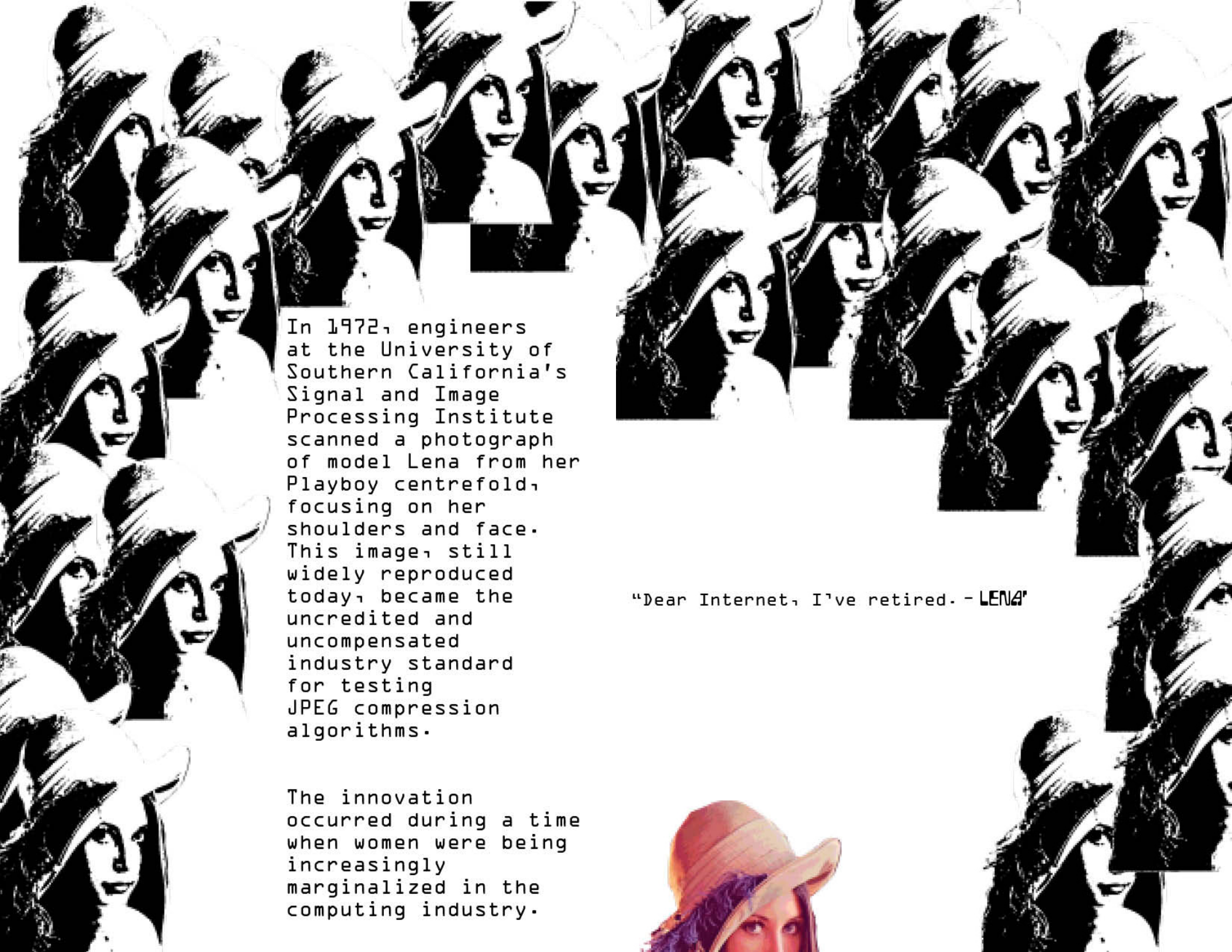
 Communities were
forged, care and
safety
networks

 expanded,
information and
harm reduction
tools circulated,
and personal and
political
narratives
shared. Workers
could work
independently and
reach clients
directly without
a manager or
intermediary.



IS THIS THE
INTERNET
WE WANT?

IS IT THE
INTERNET
WE DESERVE?



In 1972, engineers at the University of Southern California's Signal and Image Processing Institute scanned a photograph of model Lena from her Playboy centrefold, focusing on her shoulders and face. This image, still widely reproduced today, became the uncredited and uncompensated industry standard for testing JPEG compression algorithms.

The innovation occurred during a time when women were being increasingly marginalized in the computing industry.

"Dear Internet, I've retired. - LENA"

In the early years,

the
pornography
industry
was one of the few
industries making
money
through the
Internet.

DANNI'S HARD DRIVE, launched in 1995 by
Danni Ashe, a former stripper and nude model,
is recognized as one of the earliest online
pornographic websites. Ashe created and
personally coded the site after discovering
nude modelling images of herself that other
users were uploading and sharing for free on
Usenet groups.

But not all tech companies
wanted to be associated
with porn. They sought ways
to

distance

themselves from the
industry to gain
widespread legitimacy
and acceptance
and entice investors.

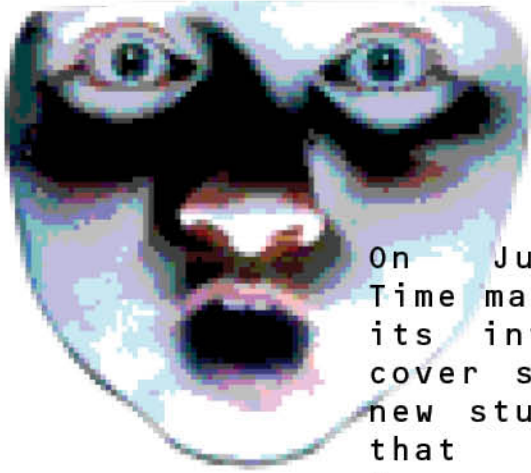


In 1994, Comdex, a major
computer industry trade
show, expelled adult
industry exhibitors who
had been relegated to the
basement alongside
lesser-known companies.
After some violated a ban
on nudity and explicit
materials, Comdex
organizers not only
ejected them but also cut
off ~~electricity~~ to the
entire floor when they
refused to leave.

**Moronic
Inferno**

"Comdex is a jarring urbanscape
- Microsoft's cathedral and Vivid
Video's porn shop, 3M's Century City
tower, and Micrographx's armadillo
racetrack - a sprawl of (mostly) men
and moving things in which you lose
your way and your head."

- Marshall Blonsky, "Moronic Inferno,"
June 1, 1994 in *Wired*



On July 3, 1995, Time magazine published its infamous 'cyberporn' cover story, touting a new study that claimed that 83.5% of all images on Usenet were pornographic. This figure was wielded by members of Congress looking to place constraints on Internet content. In time, the story was widely criticized for its overzealous coverage of a study with several problems in its methodology.

But the
damage had
already
been done.

In 2012, Facebook pulled a cartoon the New Yorker posted on its page and suspended the account because the image violated the website's guidelines prohibiting sexually graphic images. The comic depicted biblical characters Adam and Eve

(in the *nude*, of course).

in its "sex and nudity" guidelines at the time, Facebook maintained that it would block "naked 'private parts' including female nipple bulges and naked butt cracks;

male nipples are OK."
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In 2023, Meta's Oversight Board, which Mark Zuckerberg refers to as the company's **"SUPREME COURT,"** decided it would not block *nipples* on Instagram and Facebook — but only for **SOME** users. The change was made to its long-standing policy because the ban discriminated against transgender users.

THE COMPANY SAID IT WOULD RELY ON 'human reviewers' TO ASSESS A USER'S SEX AND GENDER IDENTITY, 'AS THIS POLICY APPLIES TO 'female-nipples.'"

SHADOWBANNING has become increasingly more common in the U.S. following the *Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act* of 2017 (FOSTA/SESTA). The act amends Section 230 of the *Communications Decency Act*, which **PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED BROAD IMMUNITY TO ONLINE PLATFORMS** for the content posted by their users. With FOSTA/SESTA, **PLATFORMS CAN NOW BE HELD LIABLE** if they facilitate or promote prostitution or sex trafficking.

~~"shadowbanning" is when an account is deactivated without explanation.~~

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Critics argue that FOSTA/SESTA
 Ehas had unintended CONSEQUENCES,
 such as driving sex work
 further underground and making
 it more dangerous by forcing it
 off safer online platforms. It
 Ehas raised concerns about ~~free~~
~~speech~~ and the potential for
~~over-censorship~~ on the internet.

Efforts to police
sex work(ers)
 inevitably lead to
 broader surveillance
 of people's sexuality.

The myths and carefully
 curated histories that
 persist about the
 Internet, what it was,
 and what it should
 be make it seem
 like this is how the
 Internet was supposed
 to evolve!



Except the
 Internet today is a
 PLATFORM-DOMINATED
 SPY MACHINE GEARED
 TOWARD AD DELIVERY!

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Who profits from
(y)our body,
data,
content creation,
clicks,
likes,
creativity,
ingenuity,
networks of care,
and intimacies?

Just because the
Internet has been
sanitized doesn't
make it ~~SAFE~~.

Who decides the limits to and
overreach of privacy, surveillance,
security, accessibility and profitability?

@gladisrevenge

