

Internet

10th Annual Webby Awards

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Dubbed “the Oscars of the Internet”, the annual Webby Awards celebrate individual and collective achievements of the year on the Web.

12th June saw a gathering of over 600 industry leaders from the Internet and Web worlds in New York for the tenth Annual Webby Awards. In addition to the 69 Webby Awards themselves, there were Special Achievement awards for a number of individuals:

- The Webby Lifetime Achievement Award: **Dr Robert Kahn**, co-inventor of the TCP/IP protocols, and **Prince**, in recognition of his visionary use of the Internet to distribute music and connect with audiences.
- Webby Person of the Year: **Thomas Friedman**, New York Times columnist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The World is Flat: a Brief History of the 21st Century*.
- The Webby Artist of the Year: **The Gorillaz** – <http://www.gorillaz.com>, the world's most successful virtual band and a pioneer in fusing music and animation.
- The Webby Breakout of the Year Award: **MySpace** – www.myspace.com, a social networking site.
- Webby Entrepreneur of the Year: **Mark Cuban**, owner of the Dallas Mavericks and HDNet, and evangelist for the power of technology to drive change.

The Webby Awards have been called the “Oscars of the Internet” by the New York Times, and are seen as the leading international award for excellence in Web design, creativity, usability and functionality. They are organised by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences, which is dedicated to the creative, technical, and professional progress of the Internet and interactive media. Membership of the Academy is by invitation only, and there are over 500 members consisting of leading experts in a diverse range of fields, such as musician David Bowie, Virgin Group founder Richard Branson, business guru and author Tom Peters, Body Shop founder Anita Roddick, fashion designer Max Azria, “Simpsons” creator Matt Groening, and Scott Adams, Dilbert cartoonist.

This year over 5,500 entries from over 40 countries worldwide were received by the Academy. There were 69 categories organised into eight broad groupings; Connections, Entertainment, Features, Living, Marketplace, Media, Services, Society.

There is a shortlist of five nominee sites for each of the 69 categories; each of these can receive either or both of two awards. The Academy vote chooses a single winner who receives a Webby Award. A public, online vote selects a winner to receive the Webby People's Voice Award; over 300,000 ballots were cast during this vote.

The complete list of nominees and winners can be found at <http://www.webbyawards.com/webbys/current.php?season=10>.

Last years innovation 'Webby Worthy' awards have evolved into the 'Official Honoree' awards. An Official Honoree site is one which made it onto the nominee list without winning an award, but which is notable in some way. Less than 20% of the 5,500+ nominations received were made an 'Official Honoree'. A complete list of these can be found at http://www.webbyawards.com/webbys/current_honorees.php?season=10.

The British were well represented with wins for several BBC sites: 'Feed me better' campaign website, Guardian Unlimited (again), The Barbican (an educational site to inspire creative writing) and Orange.

The Library of Congress won the People's Voice Winner for the Cultural Institution category. Google Maps and Google Earth won several awards, as did Flickr, which was last year's 'Breakout of the Year' winner.

There are six criteria for judging each nominated web site: content; structure and navigation; visual design; functionality; interactivity and overall experience. The criteria are explained here in some detail <http://www.webbyawards.com/webbys/criteria.php>, and their key points may be useful for your own website evaluations:

- *Content* – should be engaging, relevant, and appropriate for the audience. It should be clear and concise and work successfully in the medium; it always leaves you wanting more.
- *Structure and Navigation* – sites with good structure and navigation are consistent, intuitive and transparent. They allow you to form a mental model of the information provided, where to find things, and what to expect when you click.
- *Visual design* – good visual design is high quality, appropriate, and relevant for the audience and the message it is supporting.
- *Functionality* – this is the use of technology on the site. Good functionality means the site works well. It loads quickly, has live links, and any new technology used is functional and relevant for the intended audience. The site should work across platforms and be browser independent. Highly functional sites anticipate the diversity of user requirements, from file size to file format and download speed. The most functional sites also take into consideration those with special access needs. Good functionality makes the experience centre stage and the technology invisible.

- *Interactivity* – interactive elements are what separate the Web from other media. It's input/output, as in searches, chat rooms, e-commerce and gaming or notification agents, peer-to-peer applications and real-time feedback. Its make your own, distribute your own, or speak your mind so others can see, hear or respond.
- *Overall experience* – all those intangibles that entice the user to revisit, sign-up for email newsletters, bookmark the site and tell others about it.

If you would like to be involved with nominations for the 2007 Awards, the call for entries will start in September. One way to be alerted to the start of this is to sign up for the 011 newsletter, via the Webby website.¹

¹ <http://www.webbyawards.com/>