

Key Dates in the Evolution of Virtual Volunteering

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A complete summary of virtual volunteering history is available at the Virtual Volunteering Wiki <http://www.coyotecommunications.com/vvwiki/history.shtml>

1971:

Project Gutenberg, a volunteer effort to digitize, archive and distribute online written cultural works in the public domain, begins. It is probably the first instance of organized virtual volunteering.

1995:

A new nonprofit organization called Impact Online, based in Palo Alto, California, begins promoting the idea of virtual volunteering, a phrase that was probably first used by one of Impact Online's co-founders, Steve Glikbarg. Impact Online later became VolunteerMatch.

1996:

Impact Online receives a grant from the James Irvine Foundation to launch an initiative to research the practice of virtual volunteering and to promote the practice to nonprofit organizations in the United States. This new initiative was dubbed the Virtual Volunteering Project, and the Web site was launched in early 1997. After one year, the Virtual Volunteering Project moved to the Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas at Austin, and Impact Online became VolunteerMatch. The archive of the final version of the web site is available at <http://www.coyotebroad.com/vv/>

1999:

The NetAid web site is launched in September 1999, with President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain and Nelson Mandela, South Africa's former President, logging on. NetAid, a United Nations initiative, was globally launched with concerts on October 9, 1999 at Wembley Stadium in London, Giants Stadium in New Jersey and the Palais des Nations in Geneva and included a component for virtual volunteering, which later became the UN's Online Volunteering service.

2000:

Susan J. Ellis and Jayne Cravens publish The Virtual Volunteering Guidebook free online.

2001:

The United Nations Information Technology Service (UNITeS) publishes a paper on "Handheld computer technologies in community service/volunteering/advocacy," providing the earliest examples of volunteers/citizens/grass roots advocates using handheld computer/personal digital assistants (PDAs) or phone devices - what would later be called Smart Phones - as part of community service/volunteering/advocacy, or examples that could be applied to volunteer settings.