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English Digest

英语活页文选

English Digest

23



Jeffrey Preston Bezos: Person of the Year

Billion-Dollar Babies

China Girl

Computers Get Chic

※ 亚马逊网上书店老板 —— 《时代》周刊
1999年度风云人物

※ 互联网时代盛产亿万富翁

巩俐：走向世界的中国影后

※ 看上去很美：电脑时装化的到来

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Jeffrey Preston Bezos: Person of the Year

新千年来临前夕《时代》周刊评选出人们期待已久的本世纪最后一个年度风云人物。美国亚马逊网上书店的创始人杰弗瑞·贝索斯(又译贝佐斯)以其独具慧眼的经营策略与极富前瞻的商业创意赢得此项殊荣。时代永远在进步,智慧的钥匙永远掌握在人类手中。阅读本文会使您对已经到来的 21 世纪的生存战略有全新的体悟。



This year it has always been a perfect night for a launch^① party. This year it's as if "ideagethemoneyhireaCEOlaunchpartyIPO"^② has become one big, fast millennial screech^③. Companies that barely existed a year ago are publicly traded, their founders ungodly^④ wealthy. Some argue the world has entered a long boom, a kind of economic speed loop^⑤, where the centrifugal^⑥ force spins off nothing but wealth and happiness. And launch parties. So up and off an elevator you go, melting into an unimaginably beautiful crowd. Every woman looks like a model; every man looks, well, Italian. This is an Internet party, right? What on earth^⑦ could they be selling? A sign on the wall reminds you: this is the launch party for Beauty. com.

① launch: 实验,发起,发动,这里指创业开始

② ideagethemoneyhireaCEOlaunchpartyIPO: 意为点子可以赚钱,雇一个首席执行官办上市公司(IPO = Initial Public Offering)

③ screech: 尖叫,尖锐的声音

④ ungodly: 不可思议地

⑤ loop: 圆圈

⑥ centrifugal: 离心的,离心作用的

⑦ on earth: 到底,究竟

And it is a lovely site: cosmetics tips^⑧, fragrance guides, a look at the latest European lip glosses^⑨. “Oh, come on,” you’re probably saying, “who is going to buy *cosmetics* online? If there is one thing no one will buy online^⑩, it’s cosmetics. You’ve got to *see* how it looks, after all.” But wait a minute. Didn’t you say the same thing about books? “Who would buy books online? You have to be able to flip^⑪ through the pages.” And wasn’t it you who said, “I’d never buy plane tickets online. I can’t imagine not talking to my travel agent!” And mortgages^⑫? And toys? Concert tickets and CDs? “But I’d never,” you said. Yes, you will. You are.

This year Americans buy about \$15 billion worth of consumer^⑬ goods online. U. S. businesses will spend an additional \$109 billion buying from one another. And while those numbers are but a small part of the overall retail^⑭ economy—which clocks in at \$2.7 trillion—e-business^⑮ is rapidly replacing the traditional kind for almost any purchase you can imagine. By the time the ribbons^⑯ are off the packages this week, Americans will have spent \$5 billion online for holiday gifts—more than twice as much as last year.

It’s easy to sit here today nodding about the power of electrified commerce^⑰. But back in the day when everyone—was pooh-poohing^⑱

⑧ tips: 行情, 预测

⑨ glosses: 光泽, 光彩

⑩ online: 在线, 在网上

⑪ flip: 翻动(书页或纸张)

⑫ mortgages: 抵押

⑬ consumer: 消费者

⑭ retail: 零售

⑮ e-business: 电子商务, 电子商业

⑯ ribbons: 丝带, 绸带

⑰ electrified commerce: 电子化的商务

⑱ pooh-pooh: 藐视, 漠视; 嘲笑

the idea of online sales, there were a few folks who believed. One of them, on a summer day in 1994, quit^⑲ his lucrative^⑳ job at a New York City investment firm, packed up and, with his wife driving, made a now legendary^㉑ voyage to Seattle to start what he thought would be a good business. By the time he arrived there he had a plan to sell books over the Internet. Investors thought he was crazy^㉒.

Every time a seismic^㉓ shift takes place in the U. S. economy, there are people who feel the vibrations^㉔ long before the rest of us do, vibrations so strong they demand action—action that can seem rash^㉕, even stupid. Ferry owner Cornelius Vanderbilt jumped ship when he saw the railroads coming. Thomas Watson Jr., overwhelmed^㉖ by his sense that computers would be everywhere even when they were nowhere, bet his father's office-machine company on it: IBM.

Jeffrey Preston Bezos had that same experience when he first peered^㉗ into the maze^㉘ of connected computers called the World Wide Web and realized that the future of retailing was glowing back at him. It's not that nobody else noticed—eBay's Pierre Omidyar also knew he was on to^㉙ something. But Bezos' vision of the online retailing universe was so complete, his Amazon. com site so elegant and appealing, that it became from Day One the point of reference for anyone who had any-

⑲ quit: 退出, 停止

⑳ lucrative: 利润丰厚的

㉑ legendary: 传奇般的

㉒ crazy: 疯狂的

㉓ seismic: 地震的, 地震般的

㉔ vibrations: 振动, 颤动

㉕ rash: 草率的, 急躁的

㉖ overwhelmed: 被制服, 被压倒, 对……不知所措

㉗ peer: 窥视

㉘ maze: 迷宫, 迷津

㉙ be on to: 知道, 意识到

thing to sell online. And that, it turns out^{③①}, is everyone.

There was a time when Bezos could say, "If I had a nickel^{③②} for every time a potential^{③③} investor told me this wouldn't work..." and then lapse off^{③④} into head shaking. Now he follows that line with a wild, giggly^{③⑤} laugh. No wonder: as of last week, Bezos had 200 billion nickels. A rich reward, to be sure, but how on earth can you compensate^{③⑥} a man who can see the future? Perhaps by inaugurating^{③⑦} him into that club of men and women selected for having had, "for better or worse," the biggest impact in a given year. Welcome, Jeff Bezos, to TIME's Person of the Year club. As befits a new-era entrepreneur^{③⑧}, at 35 you are the fourth youngest individual ever, preceded by 25-year-old Charles Lindbergh in 1927; Queen Elizabeth II, who made the list^{③⑨} in 1952 at age 26; and Martin Luther King Jr., who was 34 when he was selected in 1963. A pioneer, royalty and a revolutionary—noble company for the man who is, unquestionably, king of cybercommerce.

As far as names go, Amazon is a perfect choice. (Not least because its ticker^{④①} symbol, AMZN, is a license-plate^{④②} version of how the stock has performed.) The wild Amazon River, with its limitless branches, remains an ideal metaphor^{④③} for a company that now sells everything from power tools to CDs, and is

③① turn out: 结果是

③② nickel: 五分的
镍币

③③ potential: 潜在的

③④ lapse off: 陷入

③⑤ giggly: 咯咯傻
笑的

③⑥ compensate: 补
偿

③⑦ inaugurate: 为
……举行就职典
礼、仪式

③⑧ entrepreneur:
企业

③⑨ make the list:
成为名单上的一
员

④① ticker: 钟, 表

④② license-plate:
(汽车)牌照

④③ metaphor: 比喻

eagerly looking for new areas of expansion. It's possible to argue that Bezos didn't master much more than an evolution^{④②} of commerce, replacing old-fashioned stores with a centralized sales and shipping center. But even that one change, he notes, grabbing^{④③} a favorite word, is "huge." For old-line businesses like K Mart, getting new customers meant building new stores at a cost of millions. For Bezos, serving new customers costs next to nothing.

And he is still losing his pants^{④④}. That's maybe the one thing people still really don't understand about the e-commerce revolution. If these are such hot businesses, then why are they hemorrhaging^{④⑤} cash? Amazon—the company everyone wants to be like—could lose nearly \$ 350 million this year. O. K., the Net is different, but don't profits and losses matter anymore? They do. Bezos insists Amazon's oldest businesses—books, music and video—will be profitable^{④⑥} by the end of 2000.

But Amazon's losses are also a sign of the New Economics of Internet commerce. These new rules spring from the idea that in the new global marketplace whoever has the most information wins. While it used to be sellers who had all the information, buyers are getting smarter and smarter. At sites like *mysimon.com*, it's possible to go shopping and search not only Amazon but also the collec-

④② evolution: 进化, 革新

④③ grab: 抓住, 抓取

④④ lose his pants: 着急, 失去镇定

④⑤ hemorrhaging: [医学] 出血的

④⑥ profitable: 获利的, 有利可图的

tions of two dozen other booksellers to find the best deal. And in coming years—heck^{④⑦}, at Net speed, in coming *months*—it will be possible to find the cheapest price on just about anything: wines, CDs, perhaps even body parts.

No venture captures these new infonomics^{④⑧} better than eBay, the four-year-old auction site. The eBay miracle isn't that it allows you to clean out your attic^{④⑨} at a profit—though that's not a bad invention—but that it changes the whole way that we set prices. On eBay, buyers get to decide what something is worth, so objects migrate^{⑤⑩} closer to their true value. Recently a Maine antiques^{⑤⑪} store put an old-fashioned calculator up for sale on eBay for \$100. Within a few days the calculator-loving collectors of the Web had bid the price up to \$6,500. The antiques sellers had had no idea that they were sitting on a gem^{⑤⑫}. But the Web's information-driven economics helped find the right price.

Applied to the world of calculators, that's something of a curiosity. But applied to everyday retail, it's a revolution. The idea of fixed prices is only about 100 years old. Before then nearly everything was negotiable^{⑤⑬}. The last great retail revolution was mail order, led by Sears, Roebuck in the 1890s, and it solidified^{⑤⑭} the idea of fixed prices, since buyer and seller were often separated by hun-

④⑦ heck: 糟糕地
(相当于 hell 在口语中的用法)

④⑧ infonomics: (= information economics) 信息经济学

④⑨ attic: 阁楼, 顶楼

⑤⑩ migrate: 移动

⑤⑪ antiques: 古董

⑤⑫ gem: 珍宝, 精华

⑤⑬ negotiable: 可商讨的, 可讨价还价的

⑤⑭ solidify: 使坚固, 使固定

dreds of miles of rail track. In the Internet age even buyers and sellers separated by 10,000 miles of fiber-optic^⑤ cable are closer than those prairie purchasers were to Mr. Sears. They are nanoseconds^⑥ away, and as is becoming increasingly apparent, speed kills. It kills old economics, it kills old companies and it kills old rules.

Bezos is struggling mightily^⑦ to make sure it doesn't kill Amazon too. Even as he cuts off competition like eBay by getting into the auction business himself (partnering with no less than Sotheby's^⑧), he is also trying to make Amazon a model of i-age shopping. When we buy one book, Amazon's computers can tell us what other people who bought that book purchased (and what they thought of those purchases). Or the site's users can look up the most popular^⑨ books at their company or in their hometown. A few clicks from Amazon's home page^⑩ will reveal, rather worryingly, that the three most frequent Amazon purchases in Los Alamos, N. M., are the biography of an East German spymaster^⑪, a book about the black market for nuclear materials and a history of Soviet espionage^⑫.

There is, in all this, a kind of humanness that is exactly the opposite of what online shopping was supposed to be like. Amazon is not a depopulated, *Logan's Run* kind of store. The site allows readers to post their opinions

⑤ fiber-optic: 纤维光(学)

⑥ nanoseconds: 毫微秒

⑦ mightily: 强有力地, 猛烈地

⑧ Sotheby: 索斯比拍卖行

⑨ popular: 通俗的, 畅销的

⑩ home page: (网站) 主页

⑪ spymaster: 间谍大王, 特务头子

⑫ espionage: 间谍活动

about books, to rate products, to swap^{⑥③} anecdotes^{⑥④}. As you sit there reading, say, a literate and charming book review from Bangladesh, the real power of the Amazon brand^{⑥⑤} comes home. It is a site that is alive with uncounted species of insight, innovation and intellect. No one predicted that electronic shopping could possibly feel this alive. If it is a sign of an e-world yet to come, a place in which technology allows all of us to shop, communicate and live closer together, then Jeff Bezos has done more than construct an online mall^{⑥⑥}. He's helped build the foundation of our future.

⑥③ swap: 交换

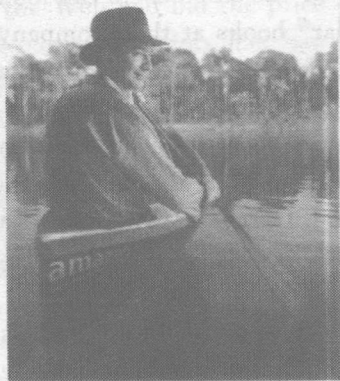
⑥④ anecdotes: 轶事, 轶闻

⑥⑤ brand: 品牌

⑥⑥ mall: 大商场

[Selected from *Time*, December 27, 1999,

written by Joshua Cooper Ramo]



(Jeffrey Bezos)

Billion-Dollar Babies

计算机产业在过去的二十五年里,经历了三次巨变,新兴的互联网则宣告后 PC 时代的来临,亿万富翁开始不断涌现,让人颇有“城头变换大王旗”的感慨。互联网时代的财富究竟是瞬间的泡沫还是名垂青史的记录,尚需时间的考验。

The recent boom^① in technological advances, formation of new businesses, and personal fortunes is the third, and most dramatic, such wave generated by the computer industry in the last twenty-five years. The first wave involved tangible^② products—“hardware^③,” as opposed to the computer programs that constitute software. In the 1960s and 1970s companies in the Santa Clara Valley, between San Jose and San Francisco, produced silicon memory chips^④ for computers—thus the name Silicon Valley^⑤. Then they produced silicon logic chips, which direct a computer's operation^⑥. Then many produced computers as well.

The great fortunes from the hardware era^⑦ include those of the Hewlett and Packard families, of Hewlett-Packard, which started making money in the pre-silicon era, with sci-

① boom: 激增, 暴涨

② tangible: 可触知的, 有形的

③ hardware: 硬件

④ chips: 芯片

⑤ Silicon Valley: [美国]硅谷

⑥ operation: 运行, 操作

⑦ era: 时代

entific instruments. The Packard Foundation, with assets of \$ 10 billion, recently overtook^⑧ the Ford Foundation as the nation's third-largest private foundation (behind the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, at \$ 17 billion, and the Lilly Endowment, at \$ 15 billion). The dominant^⑨ hardware company of the 1990s is Intel, whose Pentium and other processing chips are used in most personal computers other than the Macintosh. The assets^⑩ of Gordon Moore, one of Intel's founders, are estimated to be worth \$ 15 billion, making him the tenth-richest person in the country. Apple, the first famous personal-computer company, is still based in Silicon Valley. So is Sun Microsystems, a hybrid^⑪ hardware-software company whose products are used to run many Internet sites^⑫, and which therefore has been enjoying boom times. Other nearby hardware companies that provide the necessary physical components^⑬ for the Internet include Cisco Systems and 3Com.

But the largest fortune based on hardware is that of Michael Dell, of Austin, Texas. At age thirty-four, owing to^⑭ the success of his Dell Computers, he is the fifth-richest man in America, after three Microsoft executives and Warren Buffett, with assets of \$ 20 billion. Theodore Waitt, of Gateway Computers in South Dakota, has assets of \$ 6 billion, one of the largest fortunes built on hardware. (All

⑧ overtake: 赶上, 超过

⑨ dominant: 垄断的, 统治的

⑩ assets: 财产, 资产

⑪ hybrid: 混合的

⑫ sites: (网) 站点

⑬ components: 元件, 元素

⑭ owing to: 因为, 由于

personal-fortune comparisons here are from the 1999 “Forbes^⑮ 400.” High valuations of volatile^⑯ stocks mean that some people have moved up and some down since the Forbes survey earlier this year, but the approximate rankings and magnitudes^⑰ still hold.)

The second wave of wealth creation involved software—“application” software that people use for work or recreation^⑱, like word-processing programs or computer games, and “systems” software used to run businesses or, very often, computer networks^⑲ themselves. The difference between software and hardware provides a classic illustration^⑳ of what economists mean by “increasing returns to scale.” Because the cost of producing additional units of software—the “marginal cost”^㉑—is extremely low, once you become the market leader in a field, your profits grow astronomically^㉒. A copy of Microsoft Office 2000 Professional, the company’s flagship software product for business use, lists at retail^㉓ for \$ 349 and costs perhaps \$ 20 to manufacture. Microsoft’s total corporate^㉔ sales in the last fiscal^㉕ year were just under \$ 20 billion, of which an astounding^㉖ 39 percent, \$ 7.78 billion, was net profit^㉗. By comparison, Exxon’s sales are more than five times greater than Microsoft’s, but its net profit is smaller, \$ 6.4 billion.

Microsoft’s unparalleled^㉘ profit margin

⑮ Forbes: [美国]《福布斯》杂志

⑯ volatile: 易变的, 反复无常的

⑰ magnitudes: 数量, 大小

⑱ recreation: 娱乐

⑲ networks: 网络

⑳ illustration: 证明, 例证

㉑ marginal cost: 边际成本

㉒ astronomically: 极其巨大的, 天文数字般的

㉓ at retail: 零售

㉔ corporate: 全体的

㉕ fiscal: 财政的

㉖ astounding: 使震惊的, 使人大吃一惊的

㉗ net profit: 净利润

㉘ unparalleled: 无与伦比的

has given it the highest stock valuation of any company in the world, nearly \$ 500 billion. It has created three of the five largest personal fortunes in the world (those of the CEO²⁹, Bill Gates; the president, Steve Ballmer; and the co-founder with Gates, Paul Allen). Apart from its effect on the stock market, it has produced an estimated ten thousand millionaires³⁰, mainly in the Seattle area. One of Microsoft's early programmers, Charles Simonyi, has assets of \$ 1.5 billion. Even the company's head lawyer, William Neukom, who was in charge of the recent unsuccessful defense against antitrust³¹ charges, is worth \$ 625 million. The strongest software company after Microsoft is probably Oracle³², which makes the database software used to manage information at many Internet sites. Its chairman, Lawrence Ellison, is the eighth-richest man in America, with assets of \$ 13 billion.

But both the hardware and the software revolutions were, in their wealth-creating effects, slow to emerge compared to what is underway³³ now because of the Internet. Less than ten years ago, Tim Berners-Lee, a British physicist working at the research center CERN in Geneva, invented a scheme for linking data on a particular subject, or series of subjects, that were stored³⁴ on different computers in different places. The Internet had existed for two decades before that, as a

②⑨ CEO: (= Chief Executive Officer) 首席执行官, 总裁

③⑩ millionaires: 百万富翁

③⑪ antitrust: 反托拉斯

③⑫ Oracle: [宗教] 神谕, 预言者

③⑬ underway: 起步, 正在进行中

③⑭ store: 存储

communications channel^{③⑤} mainly among big computers at universities and research centers. But Berners-Lee took the crucial^{③⑥} step in making information on the Internet easy to find and use, through creation of the World Wide Web. The Web—the basis for the graceless^{③⑦} abbreviation “www.”—is the system that made possible today’s practice of simply clicking on words or pictures to follow trails of related information. Berners-Lee helped bring this about^{③⑧} by writing the specifications for three basic elements of the Web’s operation. One is the “uniform resource locator,” or URL, the exact name for each particular website, no matter where the computers supporting it are located (for instance, <http://www.nybooks.com>). Another is “hypertext^{③⑨} markup language,” or HTML, a way to describe how a website should look on screen, and also a way to build “links” that will take a user to another site when clicked. The third is “hypertext transfer protocol^{④⑩},” or HTTP, which controls the flow of information from the sites to the user’s computer.

Six years ago, the first commercial “browsers^{④①}” to aid navigation through the World Wide Web appeared. A stillborn effort called Mosaic^{④②} was followed by Netscape Navigator. A browser allows you to move easily from one website to another, and to see the contents of each site. If you type in a Web ad-

③⑤ channel: 渠道, 途径

③⑥ crucial: 关键的

③⑦ graceless: 不雅致的, 不礼貌的

③⑧ bring... about: 产生, 造成

③⑨ hypertext: 超文本

④⑩ protocol: 记录, 备忘录

④① browsers: 浏览器

④② Mosaic: 拼盘, 什锦

dress (or URL) at your computer, or click on a displayed^{④③} link, the browser displays the information from that website, so that you can read it and use it. Less than five years ago, in May 1995, Bill Gates suddenly recognized the way the Web might change the computer business and sent a memo^{④④} called “The Internet Tidal Wave” to his lieutenants^{④⑤} at Microsoft, saying that he now gave the Internet “the highest level of importance.” The company’s strategy for developing products shifted^{④⑥} within months, to create a browser that could compete with Netscape’s and to make its other programs “Web-friendly.” For instance, after this change Microsoft’s word-processing program, Word, allowed users to save documents as normal text files on a personal computer—or as pages that could be posted for others to view, with their browsers, on the Web.

Then, in August 1995, Netscape had the initial^{④⑦} public offering for its stock, the beginning of the subsequent Net IPO boom. It is hard to think of the four-plus years since then as making up a distinct^{④⑧} historic era, but most of the great Internet fortunes have been amassed^{④⑨} during just that period. These include the holdings of Jeff Bezos, creator of Amazon.com (\$ 7.8 billion); David Filo and Jerry Yang, of Yahoo (\$ 3.7 billion each); Jay Walker, of Priceline.com (\$ 4.1 billion); Pierre Omidyar and Margaret Whitman, of e-

④③ displayed: 展示的, 展现的

④④ memo: 便函, 备忘录

④⑤ lieutenants: 副职官员

④⑥ shift: 转变, 转化

④⑦ initial: 最初的, 开始的

④⑧ distinct: 显著不同的, 独特的

④⑨ amass: 积累, 积聚