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Web inventor Tim Berners-Lee stars in Olympics opening ceremony

'This is for everyone', Berners-Lee says in a tweet as London 2012 organisers honour the inventor of the web in the Olympic Games opening extravaganza



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Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the web, was greeted by cheers on Friday as the opening ceremony of the London Olympic Games celebrated his work.

The event showed how digital communications – and so the web itself – have become part of everyday life via the story of Frankie and June, a pair of teenagers who hook up via social networking on their mobile phones. After the musical number, a house rose into the air to reveal Berners-Lee sitting in the Olympic Stadium, live-tweeting a message that reminds us that he donated his work on the web to the world:

As well as appearing on Twitter, the message flashed around the stadium, with the letters made up of 'pixel' paddles held by 70,500 members of the audience. It reached a television audience estimated at one billion.

Olympics organisers' decision to honour Berners-Lee placed the digital revolution he helped spark on a level with the Industrial Revolution in changing ordinary lives.

The opening ceremony took British creativity, eccentricity, daring and openness as its theme, and the technological shifts these have generated. It looked at how the invention of iron smelting led to cities, cities and prosperity, and how Berners-Lee's creation of the web was just as far-reaching.



Sir Tim Berners-Lee live-tweets during the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony, with a NeXT Cube by his side

The British inventor now works with the UK government on open data, and previously on the data.gov.uk project to share public data. He was also at one time lined up to be a director at a new Institute for Web Science at Southampton University, but this plan was shelved by the coalition government when it got into power.

"The values and achievements of the Olympics will be amplified by the World Wide Web. It will be like millions of digital torches carrying the spirit of the Games to every corner of the world," Berners-Lee said, according to a report in Pocket-Lint.

 Editorial standards