

# TED turns 30 with new chapter of 'ideas worth spreading'

March 22 2014, by Glenn Chapman

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People arrive at Technology Entertainment Design (TED) on March 20, 2014 in Vancouver, Canada

TED turns 30 years old with a mind-sizzling mix of intrigue, wonder and passion in the renowned gathering's new home in Canada.

A conference born in California in 1984 that grew into a global forum

for heady "ideas worth spreading" ended Friday after gazing thoughtfully at the past and looking optimistically ahead.

"The platform has gotten more interesting to more people," Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) curator Chris Anderson told AFP.

"We are planning on taking every opportunity to go deeper into issues; to present a core idea and add to it with ways to get involved."

TED has won a global following for trademark "talks" during which the brilliant, innovative, artistic or accomplished deliver thought-sparking presentations in 18 minutes or less.

## **Broad range of TED topics**

Topics at the five-day TED gathering ranged from mind-controlling parasites and bionic limbs to intestinal microbes and collective consciousness.

Female fashion model Geena Rocero used the TED stage to, for the first time, tell how she was born a boy in the Philippines but become a woman to match her "inner truth."

"Some of my neighbors, friends, colleagues, even my agent didn't know about my history," Rocero said on the TED stage.

"Not a lot of people can say that their first job was pageant queen for transgender women, but I'll take it."

Internet spying and online privacy were hot topics at the gathering, known for attracting Internet entrepreneurs such as founders of Google, Amazon, and Netflix.

That debate was set ablaze by the surprise appearance of US former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden in the form of a robot controlled remotely from his hideaway in Russia.

"Doing it by tele-presence really excited him," Anderson said of Snowden showing up in robot form to roam the conference, even stopping for photos with Google co-founder Sergey Brin and others.

"He liked the geekiness and the symbolic appeal of the bot."

Snowden's virtual visit to TED, and his promise of sensational new revelations to come, prompted the NSA to weigh in via video link a day later to argue that his "arrogance" has put lives at risk and terrorists on guard.

"It was an intense experience, it definitely pushed my own margin of comfort to the edge," Anderson said.

Anderson saw this year's move from California to Vancouver as symbolic of the gathering's evolution into a global platform for ideas.

Anderson and Peter Diamandis of the X PRIZE announced a competition to reward those behind the first artificial intelligence creation that gives a TED talk compelling enough to earn a standing ovation.

## **A 'primal' experience**

Looks at TED's past and visions of the future were woven through the week, with MIT Media lab founder Nicholas Negroponte predicting by the end of the next three decades, people will ingest knowledge the way they do vitamins.

"Ultimately, TED is tapping into something that is quite primal - a circle of humans looking a speaker in the eyes, hearing a story told and feeling what the speaker is feeling in a shared experience," Anderson said.

The first TED gathering was a venue for elite thinkers to hear about and discuss new ideas.

Since then scientists, political leaders, artists, entrepreneurs and musicians have taken to the stage at the tech-focused gatherings.

In 2006, TED began to record talks and post them for free online at their TED.com website. The website was recently upgraded to let viewers delve deeper into ideas and take action.

As TED talks were posted in more languages, traffic to the website soared. Talks have spread to television and radio. Captivating TED speakers have become Internet stars.

"The dinner party has turned into a global phenomenon—a banquet for the whole world," said Richard Saul Wurman, who started the gatherings that Anderson's non-profit Sapling Foundation has nurtured into the TED of today.

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