

Amazon as an adult: Two decades of online shopping

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It has officially been nearly two decades since shoppers of the world were introduced to the idea of buying books online.

Seattle-based Amazon.com's e-commerce website turns 20 years old this month.

The [company](#) has grown from an [idea](#) hatched by founder and CEO Jeff Bezos to use the burgeoning Internet to revolutionize the book-selling business into an international "Everything Store" that has undeniably changed the way the world shops.

The company seems to be on a never-ending growth trajectory - Amazon employs more than 165,000 workers worldwide and last year brought in nearly \$89 billion in revenue.

Amazon celebrated its 20th anniversary of incorporation a year ago, in July 2014, and now, on July 16 of this year, it's marking the two decade-point of its website launch and first book sold. That book was no light read - "Fluid Concepts & Creative Analogies: Computer Models of the Fundamental Mechanisms of Thought," by Douglas Hofstadter.

Amazon is commemorating the anniversary with a massive sale involving one of its most successful businesses - Amazon Prime. The company is launching Prime Day on July 15. The all-day occasion will feature thousands of deals for Amazon Prime members, more deals even than on popular shopping day Black Friday, the company boasted in a release.

Deals will be introduced throughout the day beginning at midnight, sometimes as often as every 10 minutes.

Amazon's Prime Day will also feature a photo contest to pair with Prime Photo, a relatively new photo-storage service. Customers can submit photos of how Prime saves them time for the chance to win a \$10,000 gift card. Amazon also commissioned artists across the world to showcase #PrimeLiving.

Amazon hasn't said if Prime Day will become an annual event, saying it is "excited to get feedback from our Prime members."

Prime Day is likely to bring in more lucrative Prime members for Amazon, as people sign up for a 30-day trial or to continue with the service. Prime is a subscription service where members pay \$99 per year to get two-day shipping on many items at no added cost, as well as a host of other services, including instant streaming of TV shows and movies.

Amazon has expanded Prime's offerings over the years, offering same-day delivery in 14 cities, including Seattle, music streaming and some free Kindle book rentals.

The business, which Wall Street initially viewed with skepticism when it launched 10 years ago, has turned into one of the biggest successes for Amazon today.

The company frequently posts big quarterly losses, such as a \$437 million loss in its third quarter last year and a \$57 million loss in the first quarter this year.

But growing businesses, specifically Amazon Prime and Amazon Web Services - its market-leading data storage and services business - keep many investors confident about the future.

Amazon's share price is now above \$437, up 40 percent since the beginning of the year.

Prime brings Amazon roughly \$4 billion annually just from subscription fees, according to analyst estimates of member spending, and about 40 million Prime members exist in the U.S. Added to that is the extra money Prime members spend, which is about 2.5 times as much as nonmembers, according to Consumer Intelligence Research Partners.

"It's absolutely core to our retail business," Amazon Vice President Greg Greeley said earlier this year.

Prime may be one of investors' favorite services, but it's far from the only innovation Amazon has introduced.

Cloud computing has taken off throughout the business world, and Amazon Web Services is at the front of the pack. It is also profitable, bringing in \$5 billion per year, the company revealed this spring, which was even more than analyst and investors expected.

Still, it would be tough for any company to make quite the international splash Amazon has over two decades without some controversy. Amazon has faced harsh criticism over its lack of profitability, questions about its labor practices and corporate giving, and it had an infamous scuffle with major book publishers throughout much of 2014.

Amazon is working on ways Prime could soon save customers even more time.

A Forbes report suggests the company is beginning to scan backyards in Seattle for its newest technology, delivery by drones.

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