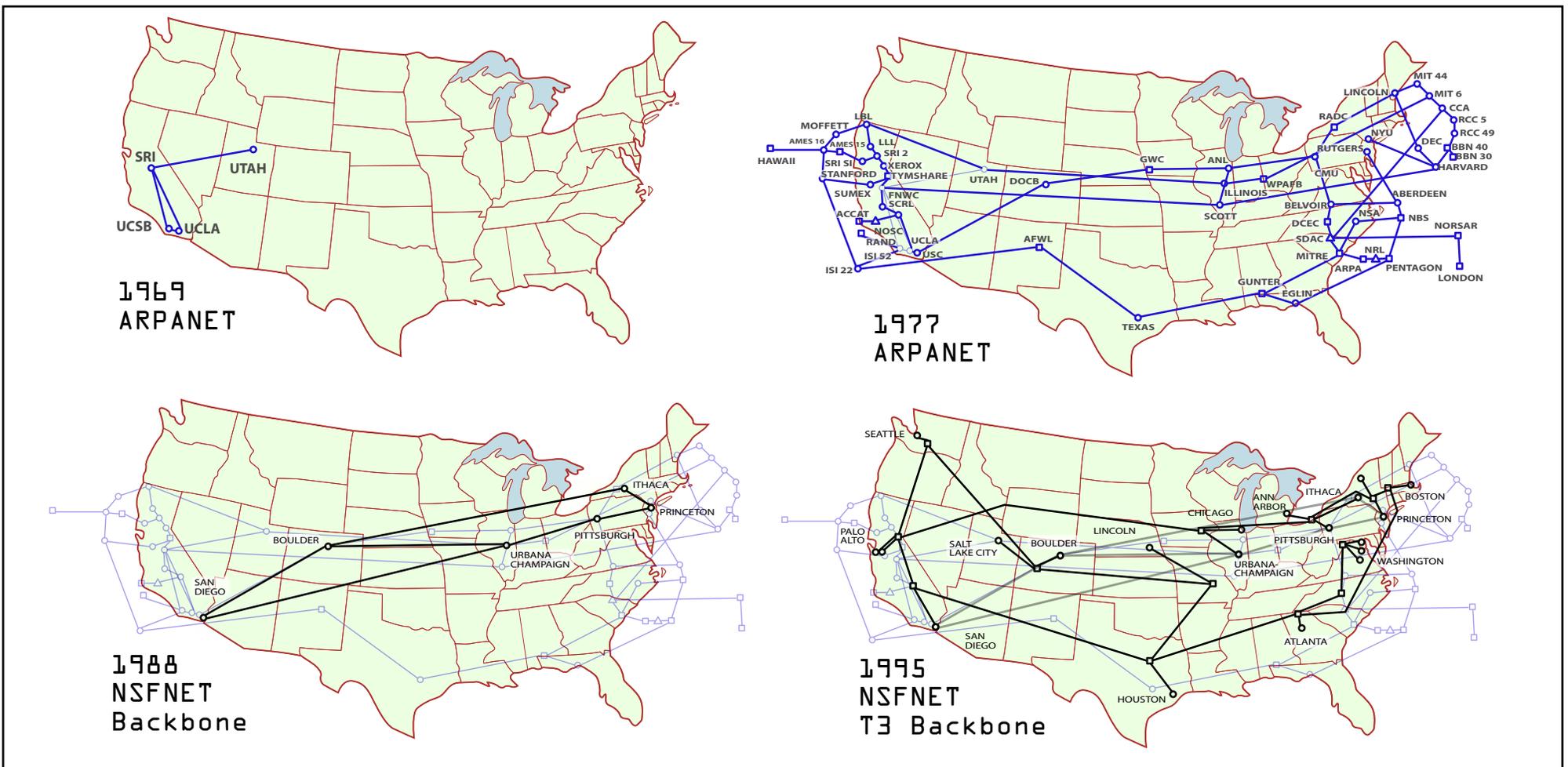


NSF and the Birth of the Internet



These four maps show, in clockwise order, the growth of the Internet from its beginning to 1995, when the NSFNET backbone was decommissioned and the private sector took over its operation.

The Internet began as an experiment in computer networking by the Department of Defense (DoD) in the

late 1960s. By the 1970s, DoD expanded its network to include several research universities and laboratories. By the 1980s, it was clear that networking had great potential to assist academic research. The National Science Foundation created NSFNET, which provided a backbone network, shown in the bottom illustrations,

for regional academic networks to connect to the national supercomputer centers and with each other.

In less than ten years, traffic on NSFNET grew at a rate of 20% a month as more and more users came online. Eventually the private sector had built sufficient Internet infrastructure that NSFNET was decommissioned.

Credit: Zina Deretsky, National Science Foundation

For more information on NSF and the internet, see: http://nsf.gov/news/special_reports/nsf-net/

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