

The inventor of email is still alive, insists India-born scientist

Written by [Nandagopal Rajan](#) | Updated: March 8, 2016 7:14 pm



Dr Shiva Ayyadurai claims he was all of 14, when as a research fellow at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), located in Newark, New Jersey, he invented email in 1978.

“CORRECTION: THE INVENTOR OF EMAIL IS STILL ALIVE,” screams an e-mail not from the deceased Ray Tomlinson, but Dr VA Shiva Ayyadurai.

This Mumbai born US inventor has been over the years crying hoarse on how Tomlinson was just the inventor of “simple text messaging” and not email as we know it today.

Dr Ayyadurai claims he was all of 14, when as a research fellow at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), located in Newark, New Jersey, he invented email in 1978.

“I had been assigned to create a software system that duplicated the features of the Interoffice Mail System, which was simply a manila envelope that physically circulated around a workplace. The envelope contained the Interoffice Memo with Attachments, and comments from various recipients on a given topic. I named my software “EMAIL,” (a term never used before in the English language), and I even received the first US Copyright for that software, officially recognising me as The Inventor of Email, at a time when Copyright was the only way to recognise software inventions, since the US was not recognising software patents,” says Dr Ayyadurai in his mail.

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The Henry Ford's Innovation Nation: Email



He claims all Tomlinson did was what Forbes wrote as “experimenting with internal messaging in 1971” he just had an idea to send a text message between computers. That Dr Ayyadurai argues is is not email – “since email, as we all know, is a system that includes features such as Inbox, Outbox, Drafts, Folders, Attachments, Carbon Copies. Groups, Forwarding, Reply, Delete, Archive, Sort, Bulk Distribution, and more”. He claims this full system was his invention.

“I have no doubt that my origin and ethnicity have strongly influenced controversy over my invention of email. This has also influenced the withholding of recognition for that invention, and for personal and racist attacks directed against me,” Dr Ayyadurai says, alleging that such attacks have been facilitated by Raytheon, Tomlinson’s employer.

He claims this large US corporation deliberately “rewrote history as it serves to enhance their brand in the lucrative cyber-security market”. He reiterates that while an online obituary for Ray Tomlinson states that he is “credited for the invention of email”, that is “not the same as doing it”.

The image displays two copyright registration forms. The left form is a 'CERTIFICATE OF COPYRIGHT REGISTRATION' for 'EMAIL' by Shiva Ayyadurai, dated 8/30/82. The right form is a 'FORM TX' for 'EMAIL' by Shiva Ayyadurai, dated 8/30/82. Both forms include fields for author name, title, and registration number.

The copyright registration for E-mail in the name of Shiva Ayyadurai.

Many counter that Tomlinson was working on electronic communication years before Ayyadurai and what the latter claims copyright for is just a system called EMAIL used within the campus.

In its obit, [New York Times](#) says in the late 1960s and early 1970s Tomlinson was working at a research and development company, Bolt, Beranek and Newman, on projects for the Arpanet, a forerunner of the Internet that was created for the Defense Department. Those days the company had already developed a closed messaging programme called Sndmsg for multiple users on a single computer. “Mr. Tomlinson, filching code from a file-transfer program he had created called Cpynet, modified Sndmsg so that messages could be sent from one host computer to another throughout the Arpanet system,” the obit says, adding this all led to him using @ to separate a user name from a destination address.

“In many ways I just did not fit the mold of a 1970s high tech innovator. I was not white, I was not working for the military or for a defense contractor, and I must have seemed too young and too naive to stand up for the truth,” he writes in the note sent to many journalists. Dr Ayyadurai has since secured four degrees from MIT, including a PhD. The 52-year-old US entrepreneur also had a controversial stint with CRIS in India, trying to set up CSIR Tech in 2009.

“It should also be clear that my expressing that truth is not an act of vanity or vindictiveness. It is simply upholding the important principle of accurate, appropriate, and fully earned recognition, as stated above.”

See his tweet below:

This MahaShivatri. A historic one [@buzzindelhi](#). Shiva's Trishula pierces the darkness of Raytheon's racist lies to illuminate truth of [#email](#)

— Dr. Shiva Ayyadurai (@va_shiva) [March 8, 2016](#)