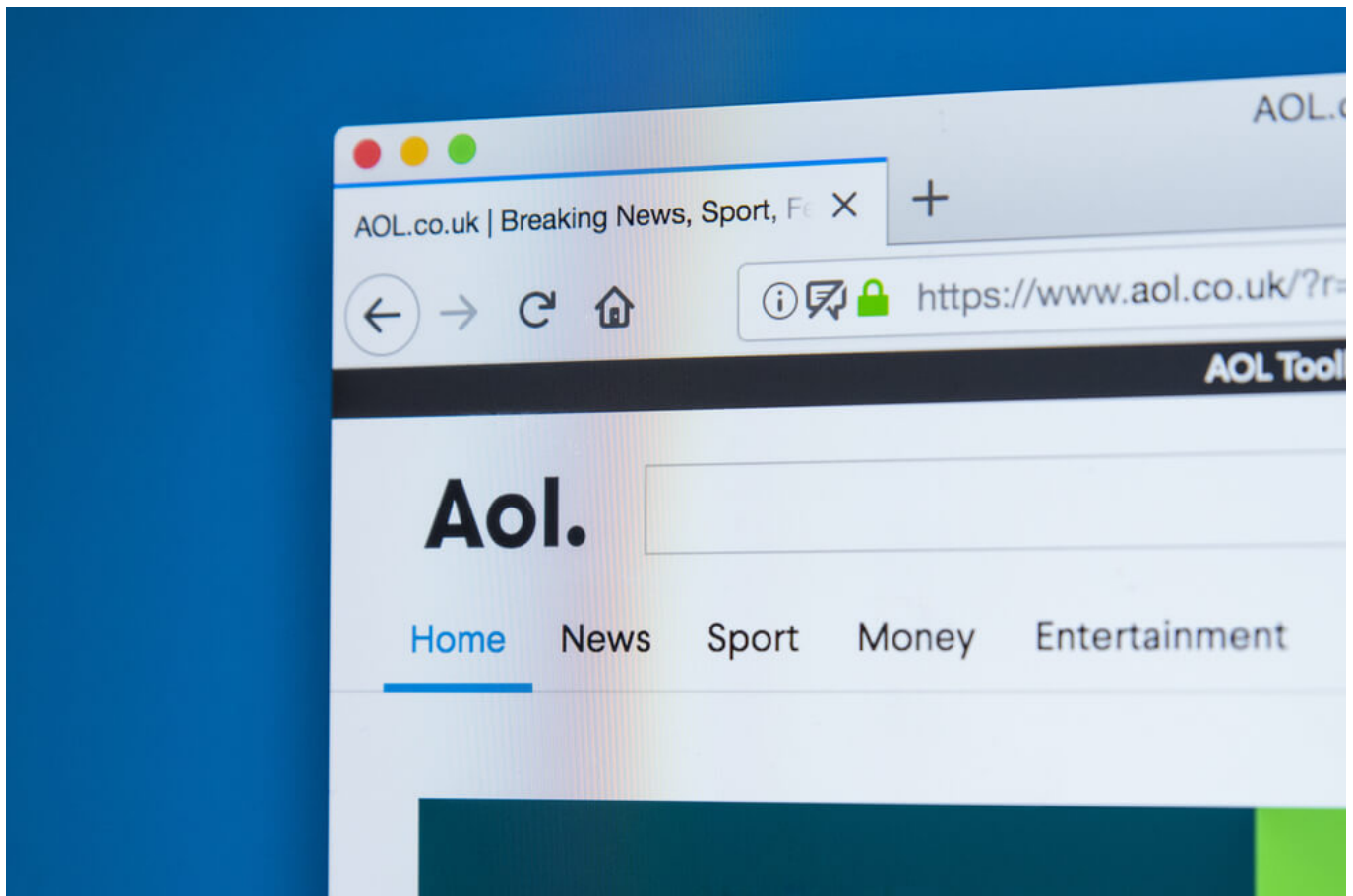




By: TA | AP Brief

The end of an era - AOL's dial up internet takes its last bow



It's official: AOL's dial-up internet has taken its last bow.

AOL previously **confirmed** it would be pulling the plug on Tuesday (Sept. 30) — writing in a brief **update** on its support site last month that it “routinely evaluates” its offerings and had decided to discontinue dial-up, as well as associated software “optimized for older operating systems,” from its plans.

Dial-up is now no longer advertised on AOL's website. As of Wednesday, former company help pages like “connect to the internet with AOL Dialer” appeared unavailable — and nostalgic social media users took to the internet to say their final goodbyes.

AOL, formerly America Online, introduced many households to the World Wide Web for the first time when its dial-up service launched decades ago, rising to prominence particularly in the 90s and early 2000s.

The creaky door to the internet was characterized by a once-ubiquitous series of beeps and buzzes heard over the phone line used to connect your computer online — along with frustrations of being kicked off the web if anyone else at home needed the landline for another call, and an endless bombardment of CDs mailed out by AOL to advertise free trials.

Eventually, broadband and wireless offerings emerged and rose to dominance, doing away with dial-up's quirks for most people accessing the internet today — but not everyone.

A handful of consumers have continued to rely on internet services connected over telephone lines. In the U.S., according to Census Bureau data, an estimated 163,401 households were using dial-up alone to get online in 2023, representing just over 0.13% of all homes with internet subscriptions nationwide.

While AOL was the largest dial-up internet provider for some time, it wasn't the only one to emerge over the years. Some smaller internet providers continue to offer dial-up today. Regardless, the decline of dial-up has been a long time coming.

Relics of the internet's earlier days continue to disappear

And AOL shutting down its service arrives as other relics of the internet's earlier days continue to disappear.

Microsoft **retired** video calling service Skype just earlier this year — as well as Internet **Explorer** back in 2022. And in 2017, AOL **discontinued** its Instant Messenger — a chat platform that was once lauded as the biggest trend in online communication since email when it was founded in 1997, but later struggled to ward off rivals.

AOL itself is far from the dominant internet player it was decades ago — when, beyond dial-up and IMs, the company also became known for its “You’ve got mail” catchphrase that greeted users who checked their inboxes, as famously displayed in the 1998 film starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan by the same name.

Beyond dial-up, AOL continues to offer its free email services, as well as subscriptions that advertise identity protection and other tech support

Before it was America Online, AOL was founded as Quantum Computer Services in 1985.

It soon rebranded and hit the public market in 1991. Near the height of the dot-com boom, AOL's market value reached nearly \$164 billion in 2000.

But tumultuous years **followed**, and that valuation plummeted as the once-tech pioneer bounced between multiple owners.

After a disastrous merger with Time Warner Inc., Verizon **acquired** AOL — which later **sold** AOL, along with Yahoo, to a private equity firm.

AOL now operates under the larger Yahoo name. A spokesperson for Yahoo didn't have

any additional statements about the end of AOL's dial-up when reached by The Associated Press on Wednesday — directing customers to its previous summer announcement.

At the time Verizon sold AOL in 2021, an anonymous source familiar with the transaction **told** CNBC that the number of AOL dial-up users was “in the low thousands” — down from 2.1 million when Verizon first moved to acquire AOL in 2015, and far below peak demand seen back in the 90s and early 2000s.

But beyond dial-up, AOL continues to offer its free email services, as well as subscriptions that advertise identity protection and other tech support.