Factoring method chronology

1967: hard 27-digit factorizations are intractible

1975: first asymptotically subexponential method, CFRAC

1977: RSA appears in Scientific American, 129-digit

challenge to break RSA129

1981-1983: Quadratic Sieve at Sandia Nat'l Labs (Cray 1)

69-digit composite factored; last of Mersenne's list
Time Magazine, 1983.

1988-1991: MPQS, ppmpqs at Digital Research (Lenstra-Mannasse)

hard 100-digit number factored; first distributed
internet computation (E-mail factorization). Workstations.

1991: special 512-bit factorization, $2^{(2^9)} + 1 = 2^{512} + 1$,

start of number field sieve (NFS)