



fact, I need to make an effort to remember it at all. So, while the World Wide Web provides a retrieval mechanism to complement the existing storage mechanism, it leaves a lot to be desired, particularly for human beings.

Finally, we move to "perceptualized" Internetworks, where the data has been sensualized, that is, rendered sensually. If something is represented sensually, it is possible to make sense of it. VRML is an attempt (how successful, only time and effort will tell) to place humans at the center of the Internet, ordering its universe to our whims. In order to do that, the most important single element is a standard that defines the particularities of perception. Virtual Reality Modeling Language is that standard, designed to be a *universal description language for multi-participant simulations*.

These three phases, storage, retrieval, and perceptualization are analogous to the human process of consciousness, as expressed in terms of semantics and cognitive science. Events occur and are recorded (memory); inferences are drawn from memory (associations), and from sets of related events, maps of the universe are created (cognitive perception). What is important to remember is that the map is **not** the territory, and we should avoid becoming trapped in any single representation or world-view. Although we need to *design to avoid disorientation*, we should always push the envelope in the kinds of experience we can bring into manifestation!

This document is the living proof of the success of a process that was committed to being open and flexible, responsive to the needs of a growing Web community. Rather than re-invent the wheel, we have adapted an existing specification (Open Inventor) as the basis from which our own work can grow, saving years of design work and perhaps many mistakes. Now our real work can begin; that of rendering our noospheric space.

History

VRML was conceived in the spring of 1994 at the first annual World Wide Web Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. Tim Berners-Lee and Dave Raggett organized a Birds-of-a-Feather (BOF) session to discuss Virtual Reality interfaces to the World Wide Web. Several BOF attendees described projects already underway to build three dimensional graphical visualization tools which interoperate with the Web. Attendees agreed on the need for these tools to have a common language for specifying 3D scene description and WWW hyperlinks -- an analog of HTML for virtual reality. The term Virtual Reality Markup Language (VRML) was coined, and the group resolved to begin specification work after the conference. The word 'Markup' was later changed to 'Modeling' to reflect the graphical nature of VRML.