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Reading Response: "As We May Think," Vannevar Bush

It's difficult to pinpoint and discuss just one interesting idea that Vannevar Bush writes about in his 1945 paper, "As We May Think," considering all the fascinating assessments he presents while proposing such progressive theories. Perhaps one of my most significant takeaways from reading this, however, was the importance of consultation. Bush claims that a record is only "useful to science" if it continuously extended, stored, and most importantly, consulted (Bush 3). Bush reiterates this statement numerous times throughout the paper, and it resonated with me as a senior in both the Marshall School of Business and the Media Arts + Practice program who also plans to pursue a career in consulting after graduation. In business, we're taught to consult everything – financial reports, sales analyses, risk management, new product development, and so forth. In my past MA+P courses, I've been taught to combine theory with practice, and consult with my peers to discuss the motives, influences and efficacies behind my digital work.

The fact that Vannevar Bush understood the importance of consultation in 1945 means more than any other modern-day technological advancement he may have imagined or proposed. To consult is to seek direction and meaning from any given information, while simultaneously providing constructive feedback for improvement. Bush asserts that the collection of data is ultimately useless if it cannot be consulted, and I couldn't agree more. What good is the Internet if we're not able to discuss, analyze and question the information it presents to us? As students, we are so used to relying on this endless record of data and information called the Internet, but we rarely recognize the importance of contributing to and questioning it. In 1945, Bush complained that society was "worse off than before – for [it] can enormously extend the record; yet even in its present bulk [it] can hardly consult it" (6). Is it safe to say that we are better off than society was in 1945? I think the Internet has evolved tremendously into a network full of consulting. Users share their every thought on social networks these days, and while most of the sharing out there may not be too valuable, it's definitely a step further in Bush's vision for an all-accessible "store of knowledge."

Bush, Vannevar (1945). As We May Think. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from:
http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1945/07/as-we-may-think/303881/?single_page=true