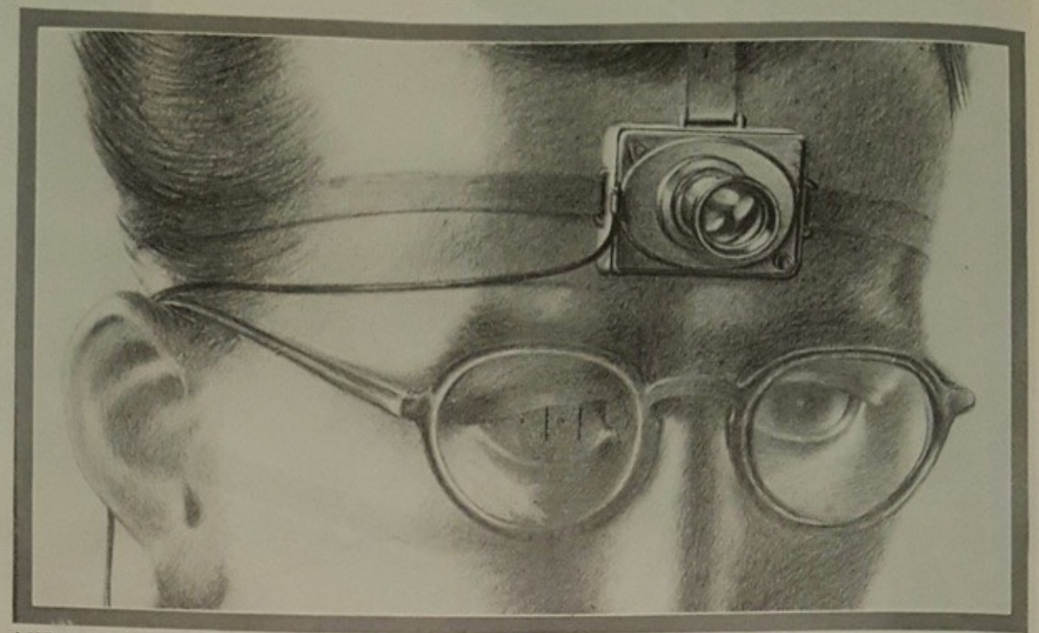


A SCIENTIST OF THE FUTURE RECORDS EXPERIMENTS WITH A TINY CAMERA FITTED WITH UNIVERSAL-FOCUS LENS. THE SMALL SQUARE IN THE EYEGLASS AT THE LEFT SIGHTS THE OBJECT

AS WE MAY THINK

A TOP U. S. SCIENTIST FORESEES A POSSIBLE FUTURE WORLD IN WHICH MAN-MADE MACHINES WILL START TO THINK

by VANNEVAR BUSH

DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Condensed from the *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1945

This has not been a scientists' war; it has been a war in which all have had a part. The scientists, burying their old professional competition in the demand of a common cause, have shared greatly and learned much. It has been exhilarating to work in effective partnership. What are the scientists to do next?

For the biologists, and particularly for the medical scientists, there can be little indecision, for their war work has hardly required them to leave the old paths. Many indeed have been able to carry on their war research in their familiar peacetime laboratories. Their objectives remain much the same.

It is the physicists who have been thrown most violently off stride, who have left academic pursuits for the making of strange destructive gadgets, who have had to devise new methods for their unanticipated assignments. They have done their part on the devices that made it possible to turn back the enemy. They have worked in combined effort with the physicists of our allies. They have felt within themselves the stir of achievement. They have been part of a great team. Now one asks where they will find objectives worthy of their best.

* * *

There is a growing mountain of research. But there is increased evidence that we are being bogged down today as specialization extends. The investigator is staggered by the findings and conclusions of thousands of other workers—conclusions which he cannot find time to grasp, much less to remember, as they appear. Yet specialization becomes increasingly necessary for progress, and the effort to bridge between disciplines is correspondingly superficial.

Professionally our methods of transmitting and reviewing the results of research are generations old and by now are totally inadequate for their purpose. If the aggregate time spent in writing scholarly works and in reading them could be evaluated, the ratio between these amounts of time might well be startling. Those who conscientiously attempt to keep abreast of current thought, even in restricted fields, by close and continuous reading might well shy away from an examination calculated to show how much of the previous month's efforts could be produced on call.

Mendel's concept of the laws of genetics was lost to the world for a generation because his publication did not reach the few who were capable of grasping and extending it. This sort of catastrophe is undoubtedly being repeated all about us as truly significant attainments become lost in the mass of the inconsequential.

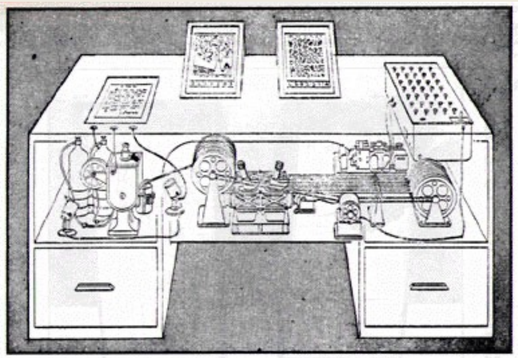
Publication has been extended far beyond our present ability to make real use of the record. The summation of human experience is being expanded at a prodigious rate, and the means we use for threading through the consequent maze to the momentarily important item is the same as was used in the days of square-rigged ships.

But there are signs of a change as new and powerful instrumentalities come into use. Photocells capable of seeing things in a physical sense, advanced photography which can record what is seen or even what is not, thermionic tubes capable of controlling potent forces under the guidance of

BEFORE THERE WAS THE INTERNET, THERE WAS AN *IDEA* OF NETWORKED THOUGHT

The Memex

- Vannevar Bush's celebrated article, 'as we may think' described a system that today we would recognize as a *hypertext system*



Memex in the form of a desk would instantly bring files and material on any subject to the operator's fingertips. Slanting translucent viewing screens magnify supermicrofilm filed by code numbers. At left is a mechanism which automatically photographs longhand notes, pictures and letters, then files them in the desk for future reference (*LIFE* 19(11), p. 123).

You learn the history of the internet while building your own personal network of notes

- You will build your own version of the memex
  - Based on things you read, things we discuss, and things I might direct your attention to
  - Parts of this meme will be pushed online for periodic review by us
  - You will be able to interlink your memex to your peers
- This exercise mirrors the nature of the course content
- The final assignment will involve you surfacing a journey through your notes that will answer two key questions:
  - What is the most powerful thing you have learned in this course, and why?
  - Have you achieved your goals for this course?