

# Issues in Multimedia

## Authoring Lecture 2: Nelson and Early Hypertext

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# Nelson and Hypertext

- History our focus
- Not a history textbook
- Primary source

# What's a Primary Source?

- An actual document, artifact, etc. of historical interest
- We have a reprint here, so the text content is the primary source
- More interesting might be an original manuscript that Nelson circulated but we don't have one



# 1974 - Computing

- Original publication year for Nelson's document
- Prior to “complete” personal computers, Internet as we know it (First use of term "Internet" appears in a conference paper by Vinton Cerf and Bob Kahn that year, however.)
- CP/M, floppy disk, Z80, 6800 all big this year



Source for image: <http://www.thocp.net/timeline/1974.htm>

# 1974 - Other Happenings

- US president Nixon in thick of Watergate scandal; eventually resigns
- “The Brady Bunch” cancelled
- Aaron breaks Ruth’s home run record
- Turkish invasion of Cyprus
- Deaths of Pompidou and Lakatos



# Summary of Nelson (I)

- Partial citation: Nelson, Ted. 2001. (1974). *Computer Lib/Dream Machines*.
- Introduces term: “hypertext”
- Hypertext is nonsequential writing

# Summary of Nelson (II)

- Motivation for work: extension of the scientific method: science as way of winnowing out falsehood
- Democratization of knowledge: connect all knowledge to everyone



# Summary of Nelson (III)

- Since structures of ideas are not sequential and tie together in arbitrary ways, hypertext is designed to reflect the structure of ideas , rather than the sequential nature of speeches and books
- Different sorts of hypertext: "basic", or "chunk style" hypertext, "collateral hypertext", and "stretchtext"



# Summary of Nelson (IV)

- "basic" / "chunk style" hypertext : footnote and referencing scheme
- "collateral" hypertext: annotations and other texts
- "stretchtext": continuous change - perhaps by a computer program (we are not told)

# Summary of Nelson (V)

- Species of hypertext documents:
- "fresh hypertexts" (new ones written for a specific purpose)
- Combine to form "anthological hypertexts" (analogous to anthologies in conventional publishing,) combine to form:
- The "grand hypertext", which is the combination (with additional interconnections) of all anthological hypertexts on a subject



# Summary of Nelson (VI)

- Nelson and Bush (not G. or G.W. !)
- Both say that scholars fragmented, not connected to society at large
- Everyone to be able "to put them in the service of truth and learning"

# Summary of Nelson (VII)

- Nelson and Engelbart
- Engelbart invented mouse (1968), NLS system
- H. involves connections between ideas. So order to use the connections the hypertext system's user must "activate" connections
- Nelson's proposal doesn't give many details
- Mouse is complementary to the Nelsonian hypertext system.



# Nelson Criticism

- Implementation?
- Nonsequential books more sophisticated
- Vagueness (e.g. in grand hypertext)
- Bush more concrete (possible project idea)