

Adriana de Souza e Silva and Fabian Winkler
database presentation, file symposium 08/09/02, Sao Paulo
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~~database~~

Adriana de Souza e Silva
and Fabian Winkler

I. INTRODUCTION

~~database~~ is an interactive installation which works like an electronic reading device.

inversion of technology:

PRINTER

text

writing x erasure

permanent ephemeral

VIDEO-CAMERA

reading

reading x listening

permanent ephemeral

DATABASE

databases

physical x digital

linear non-linear

permanent ephemeral

PRESENCE	x ABSENCE
RECORDING	x ERASING
MEMORY	x FORGETFULNESS
CONTINUOUS TIME	x PRESENT
READING	x LISTENING

permanent

ephemeral

time

II. TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

6 database printer



"To be intentional is to comprehend, to act in that, to realize an intention, but there are instances of intent, what I call it, which are imperceptible, as to know and not to intend." (Lecture, the second) "Everything, even if it is a machine, has the trace of the intention and the will, being not intentional, or the more exact, every act and every thought of the author of what has proceeded is the 'will' which made his way, or the last or perhaps of those that in the future will appear in a subsequent stage." (Lecture, the second) "Thought of a content of ideality of ideas... I believe that words envelops the past and the future, and in each case reveals the will." (Lecture, the second) "Thinking", he says, "is always also done in doing, that is, doing, which is then a thing made of being, a real, a real object, which cannot be changed, and although this thing of the machine is not the machine, something else that is not present, something else that belongs to the immaterial/idealistic world, because that only is thought, imagined, or because it was once and is no longer, past, not a substance, in the last of the dead..." (Lecture, the second) "The future is idealized and called 'I am'... words were created in our language, and continue to be used, and the same words were repeated in the same 'desires'." (Lecture, the second) "There could be no language, no letters, no signs, no pictures, no papers, without forgetting!" (Lecture, the second) "The future is thought to be your memory, if only in bits and pieces, to realize that memory is what makes you live. Life without memory is to live in it, the memory is not gathering, the reason, the feeling, the will, the will. Without it, we are nothing, a feeling and something, but nothing." (Lecture, the second) "I can only want for the final answer, the one that you give, or receive?" (Lecture, the second) "The question is not of its back, quality, but can they therefore have of their own?" (Lecture, the second) "The truth is that we all live by having beliefs." (Lecture, the second) "Someone, he who does not know?" (Lecture, the second) "Whether the present and the past could be changed, they are already necessary, but the future is itself a concept, not of things, however, through language, food, and memory." (Lecture, the second) "The fact is that it is impossible to know, but this present of the problem of what we know the past with regard to the past, and this is the present of man's future, in its present or future. Thinking is something that is very different from thinking, it is also. What are you... I am not the one who sees the past. When someone who is thinking, it is difficult to make you, what is it possible with the help of his thinking, the same question was that 'or you also?' (Lecture, the second) "But I believe I thought, or remember, that he was not very capable of change. Thinking is a thing a different, a gathering, or design." (Lecture, the second) "There is a possibility, a world, a possibility, a future." (Lecture, the

8 database cam



erase

exist?





12 database documentation video

III. DATABASES and narratives

"Databases are the very representation of our world, which also appears to us as an endless and unstructured collection of images, texts, and other data records."

Lev Manovich, "The Language of New Media"

Canclini: Like video clips, the city is made of discontinuous images. Walking through the city is like mixing diverse narratives: following the ever changing images of churches from the 17th century, buildings from the 19th century, and from all of the decades of the 20th century, cut off by huge outdoor advertisements where one is able to see the body of models, new kinds of cars and recently released computers. Everything is dense and fragmented. Like videos, the city is made of images stolen from everywhere, in any order.

Nestor Garcia Canclini, "Consumers and Citizens"

computers as story telling machines:

INTERFACE
structures
recombines



historic antecedents: MEMEX, Vannevar Bush



~~database~~

the database on the sheet of paper is already a narrative



"To be universal is to encompass, except for one, all instances of something, but they are separated by death, what is divine, timeless, inconceivable, is to know that one is universal." J.L. Lagas: *The Invention* – "Everything a man is, the mortal, has the value of the immortality and its perdition. Among the immortals, on the other hand, every act and every thought is the echo of return that preceded it in the" 1996. – "with its reader beginning in the faithful grasp of others that in the future will repeat it to a veridical degree." J.L. Lagas: *The Invention* – "Thought of a labyrinth of labyrinth, it once, I suspect that would encompass the past and the future and in some way preserve the past." J.L. Lagas: *The Invention of Writing* – "Reading", he says, "is obvious that there is a thing that is there, a thing that is there, a thing made of writing, a solid, material object which cannot be changed, and through this thing we measure ourselves against something else that is not present, something else that belongs to the immaterial, invisible world, because it can only be thought, imagined, or because it was once and is no longer, past, but unchangeable, in the land of the dead." J.L. Lagas: *Waves Sign a Wave* – "The library is unlimited and cyclical. If an eternal number were to count it in any direction, after centuries he would see that the same volumes were repeated in the same disorder." J.L. Lagas: *The Library of God* – "There could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, no present without hopefulness".

J.L. Lagas: *Ontology of Memory* – "You have to begin to lose your memory, if only in bits and pieces, to realize that memory is what makes our lives. Life without memory is unthinkable. Our memory is our intelligence, our strength, our feeling, even our action. Without it, we are nothing. I believe you discovered Tantalus when I not only was for the first time, but one that can never be forgotten." J.L. Lagas: *The Invention of Writing* – "Two words in water are often both possible, but can they therefore both of them exist?" J.L. Lagas: *The Invention of Writing* – "The truth is that we all live by leaving behind." J.L. Lagas: *Waves* – "Invention, by who does not write." J.L. Lagas: *Waves Sign a Wave* – "Neither the present, nor the past, could be changed, they are already necessary. But the future is still susceptible of change, becomes, through book knowledge, fixed, and necessary." J.L. Lagas: *Waves Sign a Wave* – "To find an artist that is permitted to produce only the precisely the paradoxical task which has not to itself with regard to time" and this is the true problem of that is to find the true answer to time. "Listening to someone read aloud is very different from reading at home. When you read, (...) you are the one who sets the pace. When someone else is reading, it is difficult to make your attention concentrate with the tempo of his reading: the voice goes either too fast, or too slow." J.L. Lagas: *Waves Sign a Wave* – "The

"To be immortal is commonplace; except for man, all creatures are immortal, for they are ignorant of death: what is divine, terrible, incomprehensible, is to know that one is immortal." J.L.Borges - *The Immortal*

"Everything among the mortals has the value of the irretrievable and the perilous. Among the immortals, on the other hand, every act (and every thought) is the echo of others that preceded it in the past, with no visible beginning, or the faithful presage of others that in the future will repeat it to a vertiginous degree." J.L.Borges - *The Immortal*

"I thought of a labyrinth of labyrinths, of one (...) labyrinth that would encompass the past and the future and in some way involve the stars." J.L.Borges - *The Garden of Forking Paths*

"Reading", he says, "is always this: there is a thing that is there, a thing that is there, a thing made of writing a solid, material object, which cannot be changed, and through this thing we measure ourselves against something else that is not present, something else that belongs to the immaterial, invisible world, because it can only be thought, imagined, or because it was once and is no longer, past, lost unattainable, in the land of the dead..." I Cavino - *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*

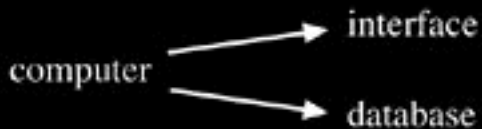
"The library is unlimited and cyclical. If an eternal traveler were to cross it in any direction, after centuries he would see that the same volumes were repeated in the same disorder." J.L.Borges - *The Library of Babel*

"...there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, no present without forgetfulness".

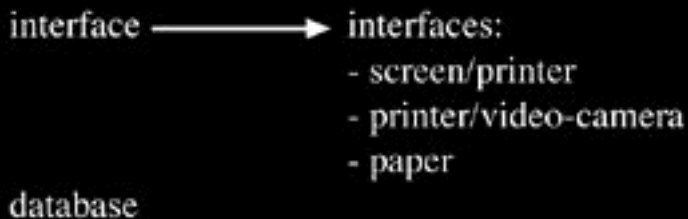
F. Nietzsche - *On the Genealogy of Morals*

"You have to begin to lose your memory, if only in bits and pieces, to realize that memory is what makes our lives. Life without memory is no life at all... Our memory is our coherence, our reason, our feeling, even our action. Without it, we are nothing. L. BuDuel, *spud*."

Manovich:



~~database~~



databases

PHYSICAL

DIGITAL

- encyclopedias
- libraries

IV. A PRINTER THAT READS

- printer as an input device
- listening/reading in real time

oppositions:

- the printer does not print text, but erases words.
- the printer (or the camera) reads, but does not record.

READING x WRITING
SPEAKING x WRITING

PERMANENT: writing - way of recording information
EPHEMERAL: speaking

ORAL CULTURE:

story telling

circular time

WRITING PERIOD:

linear time

DIGITAL AGE:

hypertextual memory

non-linear time

NARRATORS

transmit AND
store information

information storage devices

readers/narrators

Aristotle, definition of a narrative:
something that has a beginning, a middle and an end.

—————> linear thinking is a consequence of writing

ORAL CULTURE:

story telling

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AUTHOR

READER



Leibniz' theory of impossible worlds and divergence of series:



"In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the fiction of T'sui Pen, he chooses simultaneously all of them. He creates, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork."

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths"

role of the author: to create the database

role of the reader: to organize the text, creating the narrative

LISTENER x NARRATOR

"Listening to someone read aloud is very different from reading in silence. When you read, you can stop or skip sentences: you are the one who sets the pace. When someone else is reading, it is difficult to make your attention coincide with the tempo of this reading: the voice goes either too fast or too slow."

Italo Calvino, "If on a Winter's Night a Traveler"

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video-camera ↔ reader (narrator)
user ↔ listener

The "listener" is forced to follow the rhythm of the printer, because the user cannot really hold the text in his/her hands.

role of the printer:

OUTPUT

x

INPUT

printing

reading
(narrator)

reading → the reader determines the rhythm

listening → the reader follows the rhythm of the narrator
(in real time)

~~database~~

emphasizes the spoken over the written

human beings: live in all times but the present



HUMANS

x

ANIMALS

desire

future

awareness of death

mortal

finite

don't desire

present

not aware of death

immortal

eternal

"...to be immortal is commonplace; except for man, all creatures are immortal, for they are ignorant of death; what is divine, terrible, incomprehensible, is to know that one is immortal."

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Immortal"

V. ERASING THE WRITING
- TIME AND MEMORY
DEVICES



importance of erasing for human survival:

- physical erasure of writing, cf. palimpsest
- erasure of memory

storage of information through **WRITING** and **MEMORY**

PALIMPSEST

writing

|

erasing

|

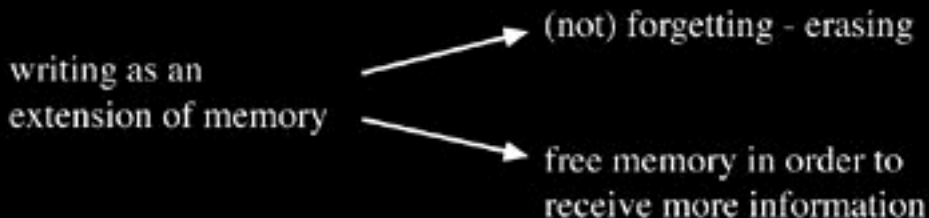
writing

~~database~~

writing

|

erasing/writing



"...the truth is that we all live by leaving behind."

Jorge Luis Borges, "Funes, the Memorious":

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Immortal":

INFINITE present



INFINITE memory



PEOPLE MUST FORGET IN ORDER TO LIVE

