

We see in hypertext the ability to aggregate data much as Mr. Bush suggests. The “trails” of which he speaks don’t quite match up to the links and bookmarks of our World Wide Web, but the intent is similar: to provide a means of navigating through the vast body of material in a meaningful way. In our World Wide Web, we send each other meaningful URLs instead of photographs of our trails. Also, rather than each of us having our own set of trails which we must exchange by means of duplication and re-entering of the data, we all refer to a common set of trails, to which we can add at any time.

Unfortunately, unlike Mr. Bush’s vision, trails do degrade and fail over time. Pages move, accounts are disabled, ISPs go under, and over time, what was a vibrant trail of information becomes a ghostly land of “this page has moved” and “404: Document Not Found”. It is a sad thing, this loss of information, and one that Mr. Bush’s vision explicitly prevented.

My vision for complex content is much more like the Wikis and blogs of today. They would use the World Wide Web format so familiar to us, but would be editable by anyone. Anyone could add a link from one page to another, or provide comments on the posted material.