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Over the past two decades, the World Wide Web has taken its place in the daily lives of millions of people who use it to search, share and publish information. The Web has by now assumed such a dominant cultural position that it may seem difficult to imagine alternatives. But in the years leading up to Tim Berners-Lee's world-changing invention, pioneering information scientists were exploring a wide range of concepts, systems and technologies that were designed to try to provide the kinds of information access that are today globally and instantly available through the Internet and World Wide Web. Some of these pioneers contributed directly to what was to follow. Some of their ideas remain as guidelines for developments still to come; others fell into oblivion and have had to be rediscovered and reassessed.

All of their work, however, is of the greatest interest historically in providing a range of contexts for assessing the extent of what has been achieved, the problems of what remains to be done and the nature of the increasingly complex information-based society within which we live.

These presentations will explore aspects of the work of such visionaries as **Paul Otlet** (founder of Mundaneum), **Vannevar Bush**, **Doug Engelbart**, **Ted Nelson**, **Andy Van Dam**, **Wendy Hall** and others who have contributed so much to setting the stage for the drama of today’s digitized networked world.”

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