

## Role of the Library as an Extension of the Mind Vinod Chachra

The publishing and self-publishing of born digital materials are already creating an “information deluge.” Additionally, mass digitization projects like the Million Book Project, the Google Library Project and the Open Content Alliance hold the promise of making vast amounts of additional content available to users. Already the available information exceeds our ability to organize and use it. How will the libraries of tomorrow cope with this? To answer this we need to start with information systems.

There are three parts to an information system: People, Technology (computers and communications) and Content (data). This presentation will explore the changes we need to make to our *technology* so that *content* can be better organized and managed and made more useful to *people*. To make these changes a reality, we must first understand the natural capabilities (and limitations) of people and marry them with the strengths of our technology. People are smart because they can visualize and extrapolate and they are efficient because they can forget. Should our smart technology be seeded with the ability to forget some content? If so, how? Which content?

Our library systems today focus on searching. Do we also need probing? Suggesting? Recommending? Should we provide “hooks” in our content to make it more machine processable to help people identify links and associations that would otherwise be lost, or found only by chance?

Google has a goal of “organizing the world’s information.” Is this goal achievable given the vastness and diversity of the content and the many languages in which it exists? Even if it is achievable, is it desirable that a for-profit organization does it? Will this “organizing of the world’s information” require worldwide interoperability? Is this even possible? And, if it is possible can we make a linked and interoperable set of institutional repositories an extension of the human mind? Should we try?