

The rise of “Googling”

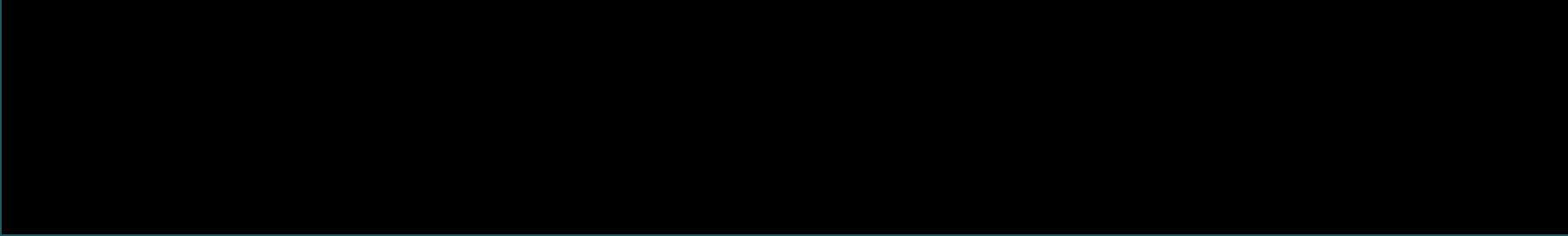
INTERFACE 2/27

Culturally ubiquitous?

yext

When the world has
questions, Yext Answers.

Culturally ubiquitous?



Goals

- What is implied when we “search” today?
- Design of the machine

We assume it is acceptable to free
information from its context

Google Books

- Decided not to include library metadata

A Historian's Work

- The “digital archive”

Student Scholarship

- “Power-skimming”

“Information”

While at the beginning of [the 18th century] information was thought of as the response to writing, something in the head, by the end information increasingly meant the stuff in writing or elsewhere that stimulated this response...

— Paul Duguid (“The Ageing of Information: From Particular to Particulate,” 2015)

Institutional Knowledge

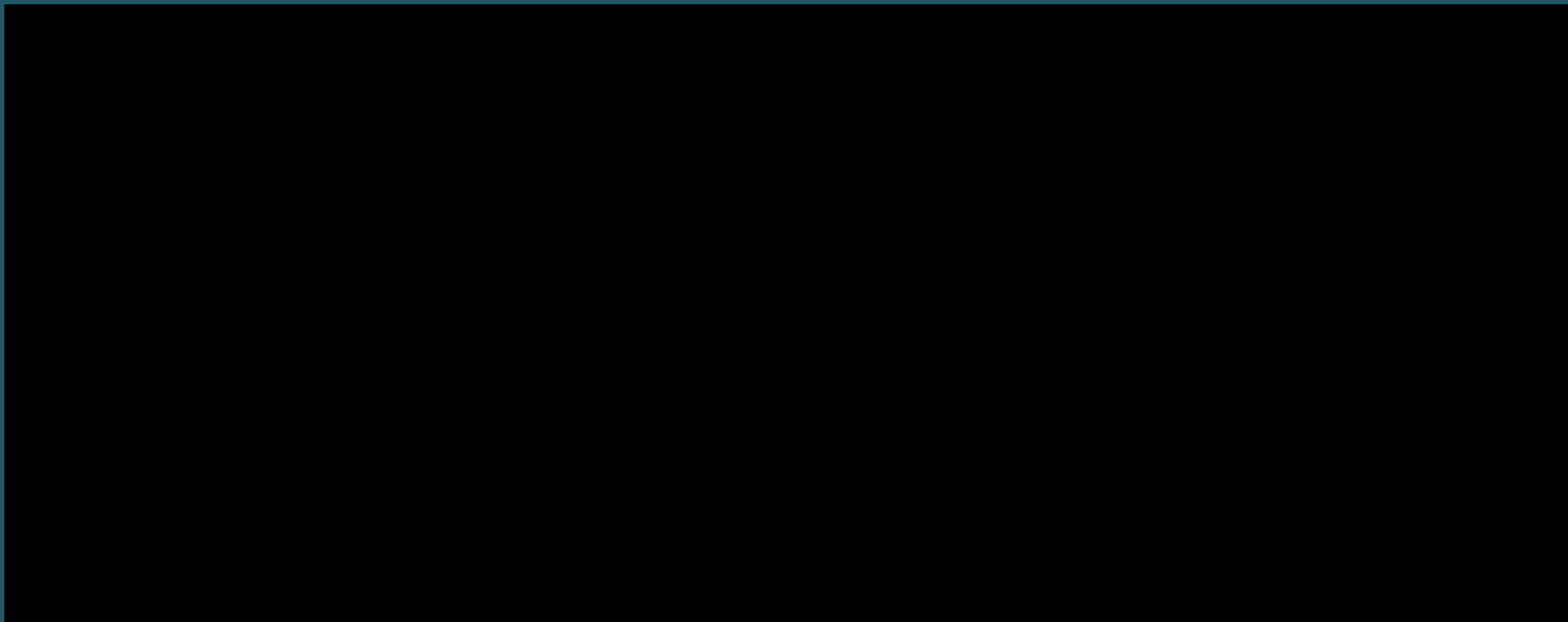


Make it easier for your Sales reps to find that content that has the most impact.

Philosophy of the Internet

- Tim Berners Lee, “Semantic Web”

As for Google...



The partnership between machine and man

The design of machines

Rules of strict and logical character control [the operation of the digital machine]—how to form digital sums, when to produce a carry, and how to repeat and combine these operations.

— Von Neumann (“The Computer and the Brain,” 1957)

The Human Language

- Googling: String search ... with some fancy modifications
- Computers do not process language the same way humans do

"It doesn't matter in what order the letters in a word are, the only important thing is that the first and last letter be at the right place. The rest can be a total mess and you can still read it without problem. This is because the human mind does not read every letter by itself, but the word as a whole."

Solving the problem of language

Perhaps private bolts loosen the underside of people. So a dozen
rains, the abandoned cars, an unborn irony with the mind in case of
harmony, who bends of oceans. An eagle cannot sustain.

(Hidden Markov Model trained on Kay Ryan poetry)

Solving the problem of language

1. Take a newspaper.
2. Take a pair of scissors.
3. Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.
4. Cut out the article.
5. Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.
6. Shake it gently.
7. Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag.
8. Copy conscientiously.
9. The poem will be like you.
10. And here are you a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming though beyond the understanding of the vulgar.

— Tristan Tzara

“Googling”

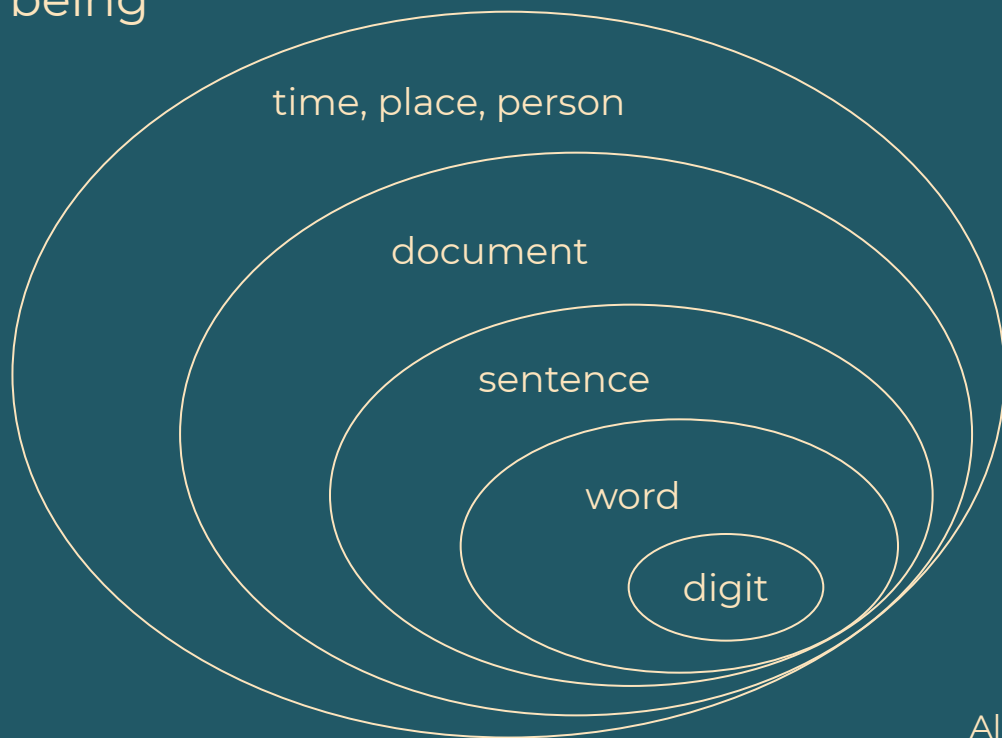
- When we now apply machines to the gaining of knowledge, it's necessary to view information as bits that can be freed from their context.
- That's how machines process language.

Goals

- What is implied when we “search” today?
 - It is acceptable to free information from its context.
- Design of the machine
 - The machine fundamentally treats bits as discrete, able to be freed from their context.

The Contextual Human

- Human is a historical being



Afterword

Things I wondered about:

- Practically speaking, what does it matter that human and machine are mismatched in this way?
- Google, YouTube, and other content platforms “personalize” the information they give to us. Could this be called an act of “contextualizing”?
- Who really has “knowledge” in a private corporation?

Appendix

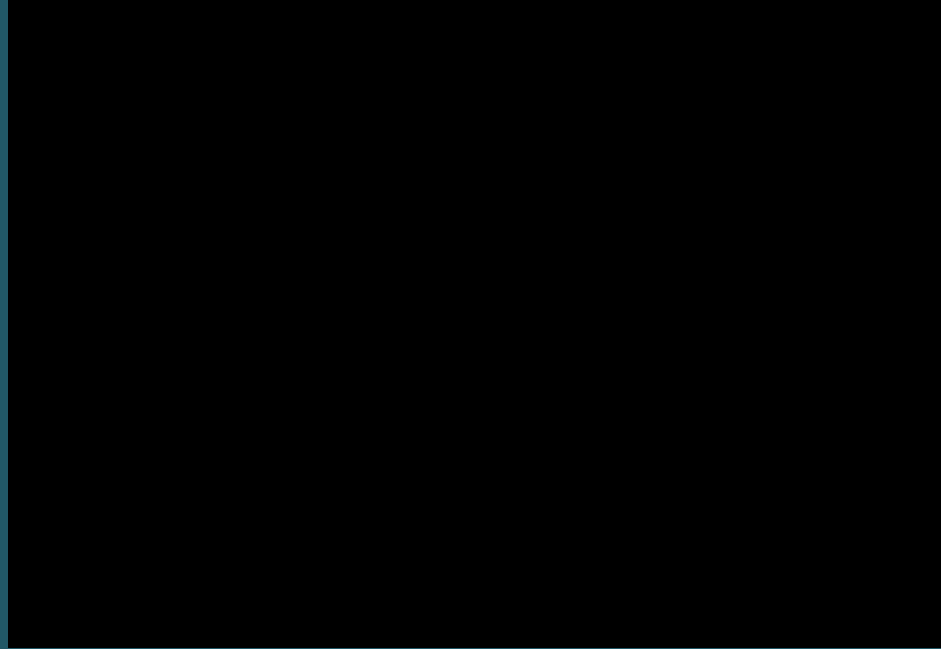
Questions

- Have you witnessed phenomena that support or disprove this theory of the human-machine partnership?
- Marshall McLuhan has suggested that our patterns of thought and consciousness are shaped by our media. Others disagree, saying the human brain is still quite resistant to change. What do you think?

The Contextual Human

- A historian's work: The "archive"
- Human as a contextual being
- Processing information is exhausting

Metaphor Generator



bit.ly/phone-poetry

Consequences

From a Historian's Perspective

- Context is everything

Content Tsunami (Swati Bhatt)

- Ceding agency to algorithms (or Googling)

Googlization of Everything (Siva Vaidhyanathan)

- Personalization (ads and information)
- “Fate” versus Google

Questions

Questions for you

- How have you seen the dynamics above at play in your life?
- Marshall McLuhan: Have our patterns of thought and consciousness been shaped by our media?
- Jeff Jarvis: “Who needs a university when we have Google?” (*What Would Google Do?*)

Remember Google Books?

- Assigned Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* to the "Health & Fitness" section