quantity and quality

questions of quantity, quality and info-anxieties

September 5, 2007
"How much new information is created each year" Newly created information is stored in four physical media—print, film, magnetic and optical—and seen or heard in four information flows through electronic channels—telephone, radio and TV, and the Internet."
"The United States produces about 40% of the world's new stored information, including 33% of the world's new printed information, 30% of the world's new film titles, 40% of the world's information stored on optical media, and about 50% of the information stored on magnetic media."

- HMI
"If digitized with full formatting, the seventeen million books in the Library of Congress contain about 136 terabytes of information; five exabytes of information is equivalent in size to the information contained in 37,000 new libraries the size of the Library of Congress."

—*How Much Information*
"On an average weekday, the New York Times contains more information than any contemporary of Shakespeare's would have acquired in a lifetime."
when did we start asking such questions"  
about what?  
technology and quantification  
recurring anxieties
what kind of question?

"how much information?"

Results 1 - 10 of about 940,000 for "how much information".
"how much information?"

[118,000 books, 1473-1700]

[150,000 books, 1700-1800]

1788, 1789, 1795, 1796
"how much information?"

"How many mental pleasures, and how much information should we be deprived of if there was no night?" Sturm, Reflections, Edinburgh, 1788.

"... how much information he derived from this excellent writer;" Jones, Memoirs of ... George Horne. London, 1795

"How much ingenuity might be displayed and how much information communicated by a professor." Clarke, Letters to a Student, Boston, 1796
"How much information, how much consolation, and how much fortitude do you afford me at the close of my life." Voltaire to Frederick of Prussia, London, 1789
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Voltaire to Frederick of Prussia, London, 1789
How much information?

**Times** (London)
1784-1900: **12**
how much information can be contained in so handy and compact a volume (1892)

**New York Times**
1851-1900: **12**
4 concerning books
Pinto, 1774: The best book is not that, perhaps, which contains the greatest quantity of information.

House of Lords, 1788: You have said Mr. Hastings could not have obtained full and compleat Information upon the subject?

James, 1790–98: Whatever difference may be found between the parts of this work of mine already published .. as to the quantity of information ...

Knox, 1790: [Salamasius's works] furnish a great variety and quantity of information.
Bond, 1795: By presenting [the reader] with a quantity of information

Longworth, *Almanac*, 1799 The register will be found to contain double the quantity of information ever before inserted in it.

*Historical Magazine*, 1799

Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands .. does not admit of abridgement, because every sentence compresses such a quantity of information.
in the press

"quantity of information"

**Times** (London)
1784 -1900: 43

7 ads (dictionaries, grammars, atlases);
25 books (reviews), newspapers, reports;
7 education;
1 telegraph;
1 trade statistics,
in the press


The great popularity of the “Household” column of the Sunday edition of The Times, found useful in all. The recipes have come from all directions, some from the inmost recesses of our large cities, some from remote spots in the country, whence they could never have been hunted out for the benefit of the public at large, except through the medium of The Times. It proves, in fact, how much useful information lies hidden away in isolated places, but ready to be spread abroad directly the opportunity for utilizing it arises. And while the Household Column of our paper testifies further to the same fact by its continuous wealth of useful hints upon a wide variety of topics, we are assured that this reissue must prove a very acceptable aid to families, in many of which it will be not less appreciated in because offered to them at a moderate price.
NEW PUBLICATIONS.

READY THIS DAY.

GREELEY'S TRAVELS IN EUROPE.—GLANCE AT EUROPE: In a series of Letters from GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE, ITALY, &c. By HORACE GREELEY. Octavo, cloth; price, one dollar. This volume comprises the observations made during Mr. Greeley's recent European tour, on Society, Manners and Customs, Art, Literature, Agriculture, Foreign Politics, and a great variety of other attractive and exciting topics.

It has copious notices of the Great Exhibition or World's Fair in London; complete descriptions of the Cultivation of the Soil in different countries; brilliant Criticisms of the Works of Art in the great European Capitals; and graphic sketches of Public and Domestic Life in London, Paris, Rome, &c., written in the frank, straightforward, piquant style for which Mr. Greeley is widely celebrated.

A more authentic, instructive, and amusing Book of Travels has probably never been issued from the American press. The vast amount of information which it contains is presented in such a lively and off-hand manner that the perusal of the volume becomes as interesting as a novel.

Whoever would obtain a fresh, Daguerreotype view of the present state of England, should not fail to make himself acquainted with its contents. Even the discussion of the driest topics, which it sometimes takes up, is enlivened with such frequent flashes of humor, and pervaded with such genial and sparkling vivacity, that no one who commences the volume can lay it down without finishing its perusal.

We confidently anticipate a very extensive circulation for this work throughout the United States. The name of
NOTICES OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.

The Overland Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin is, perhaps, as deeply interesting as any marine effort. Sir John Richardson set out from Quebec early in the Summer of 1818, and traversing all that wild region stretching between the Lakes and the Arctic Sea, explored the shores of those gelid waters in pursuit of the long lost voyagers. While he was unsuccessful in his main object, yet the journey was exceedingly profitable in other ways; and those who read Sir John's "Arctic Searching Expedition," as issued by the Harpers, will be grateful for the immense amount of information respecting the nations, languages, climate and other peculiarities of those elevated latitudes. The appendix might serve separately for a geography of the British Possessions, so complete and methodical are the matter and arrangement.
poses. So in other circles, FitzRoy Cunningham, Esquire, a shrewd and clear-headed merchant, who has acquired princely wealth without education, has made himself generally intelligent, and has acquired an immense amount of information regarding nearly everything in the world, has little respect for science or learning; unless, indeed, he may stand at the head of the Board of Trustees and contrive with his brethren to get out of the Faculty the maximum of work at the minimum of salary. (Laughter.) As a general
“Intellectual culture consists, not chiefly, as many are apt to think, in accumulating information, though that is important, but in building up a force of thought which may be turned at will on any subjects, on which we are called to pass judgment.”

--William Channing, 1838

“It may well be questioned whether the invention of printing, while it democratized information, has not so levelled the ancient aristocracy of thought”

--James Lowell, 1893
and quality?

"quality of information"

1,666,000 [vs. 618,000 quantity]

348 in 6 months [vs 52]
Charles Taylor, *Surveys of nature* ... 1787 while they are instances of the general desire of knowledge, are also proofs of the necessity that it should be directed by sagacity and virtue; it is not the quantity but the quality of information which renders it valuable.
still "quality"

**Times** (London), 1784-1900: 0

**New York Times** 1851-1900: 0

**Google Books, 1800-1850: 13/9**

_Dublin U Magazine, 1839:_ that the quality of information concerning Germany is a thing much more to be desired than the quantity [review]

_Perils of the Nation 1844:_ the degree and quality of information acquired by those in schools

Qofl September 4, 07- 24
1850 [publisher's puff for "diseases of winter"]

*Manual of Analytical Chemistry*. 1831. [review]: unequalled both for quantity and quality of information

*Churchman's Review*. 1843 [on education]: Let us look a little more narrowly ... the extent and quality of information

*Medical Review*. 1842: quality of information communicated to the student .... should be improved

*Minutes of the Committee* [education], 1850: with reference to the extent and the quality of information
the urge to count

Alvin Toffler
"The Quantity of Culture,"
Fortune, 1960

"The United States suffers from an inferiority complex about its culture consumption ... I shall attempt to give a rough idea of the amount of culture consumption in this country."

-- The Culture Consumers, 1961
fear of technology

"It will soon be the employment of a lifetime merely to learn [books'] names. Many a man of passable information at the present day reads scarcely anything but reviews, and before long, a man of erudition will be little better than a mere walking catalogue."
"Even for studies, where expenditure is most honorable, [developing libraries] is justifiable only so long as it is kept within bounds. What is the use of having countless books, and libraries whose mere titles their owners can scarcely read through in a whole lifetime? The mass of them does not instruct but rather burdens the student; and it is much better to surrender yourself to a few authors than to wander through many. Forty thousand books were burned at Alexandria; let someone else praise this library ... as did Titus Livius, who says that it was the most distinguished achievement of the good taste and solicitude of kings. There was no "good taste" or "solicitude" about it, but only learned luxury--no, not even learned, since they had collected the books, not for the sake of learning, but to make a show, just as many who lack even a child's knowledge of letters use books, not as the tools of learning, but as decoration for the dining room."
Thamus replied: O most ingenious Theuth, the parent or inventor of an art is not always the best judge of the utility or inutility of his own inventions ... this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality."
quality not quantity
quality not quantity

Knowledge Discovery for Business Information Systems - Page 15
by Witold Abramowicz, Jozef Zurada - Computers - 2000 - 456 pages
These changes should affect quality not quantity of information retrieved by the system. That is why profiles should be improved only by incoming documents ...
Limited preview - Table of Contents - About this book

Management of Information Systems Technology - Page 139
by Janice Burn, Eveline Caldwell - 1990 - 272 pages
The emphasis is on quality, not quantity, of information. In planning for the adoption of IT it is imperative to avoid computerizing any badly designed ...
Snippet view - About this book

The Public Relations Journal - Page 21
by American Council on Public Relations, Public Relations Society of America - 1
C Quality, not quantity, of information. C Professional looking publications, B
Sources of additional information. Assuming that these five points are of ...
Snippet view - About this book

Coach & Athlete
by Georgia Athletic Coaches Association
The enthusiastic but novice coach often learns the hard way that it is quality not quantity of information which assists his players the most. ...
Snippet view - About this book

Tuning Microsoft Server Clusters: Guaranteeing High Availability for
by Robert W. Buchanan - Technology - 2003 - 368 pages
Focus on quality, not quantity of information. A good analogy is the software
"The amount of information is defined, in the simplest cases, to be measured by the logarithm of the number of available choices."

"The word information, in this theory, is used in a very special sense that must not be confused with its ordinary usage."

--Weaver, 1949