INFORMATION ORGANIZATION LAB

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Introductions.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

With concepts like those explored in Info 202

The first goal for this class is to get hands-on experience with 202 concepts.

EXPERIMENTS

Keeping with the idea of this as a lab course, we'll be doing two kinds of experiments.

1. We'll repeat experiments that other people have already done to learn better for ourselves.
2. Try out completely new ideas (where we don't already know the result) and see the effects.

I SCHOOL TOOLBOX

The second goal for the class is to building a toolkit for future work on iSchool projects. We'll work with rapid prototyping as a quick way to see if an idea has any merit. We'll also look at collaborative tools like version control.

WHAT THIS COURSE *ISN'T*

Often a negative definition is just as helpful for understanding someone, so we thought we would give you a few details on what this course isn't.

INFO 202

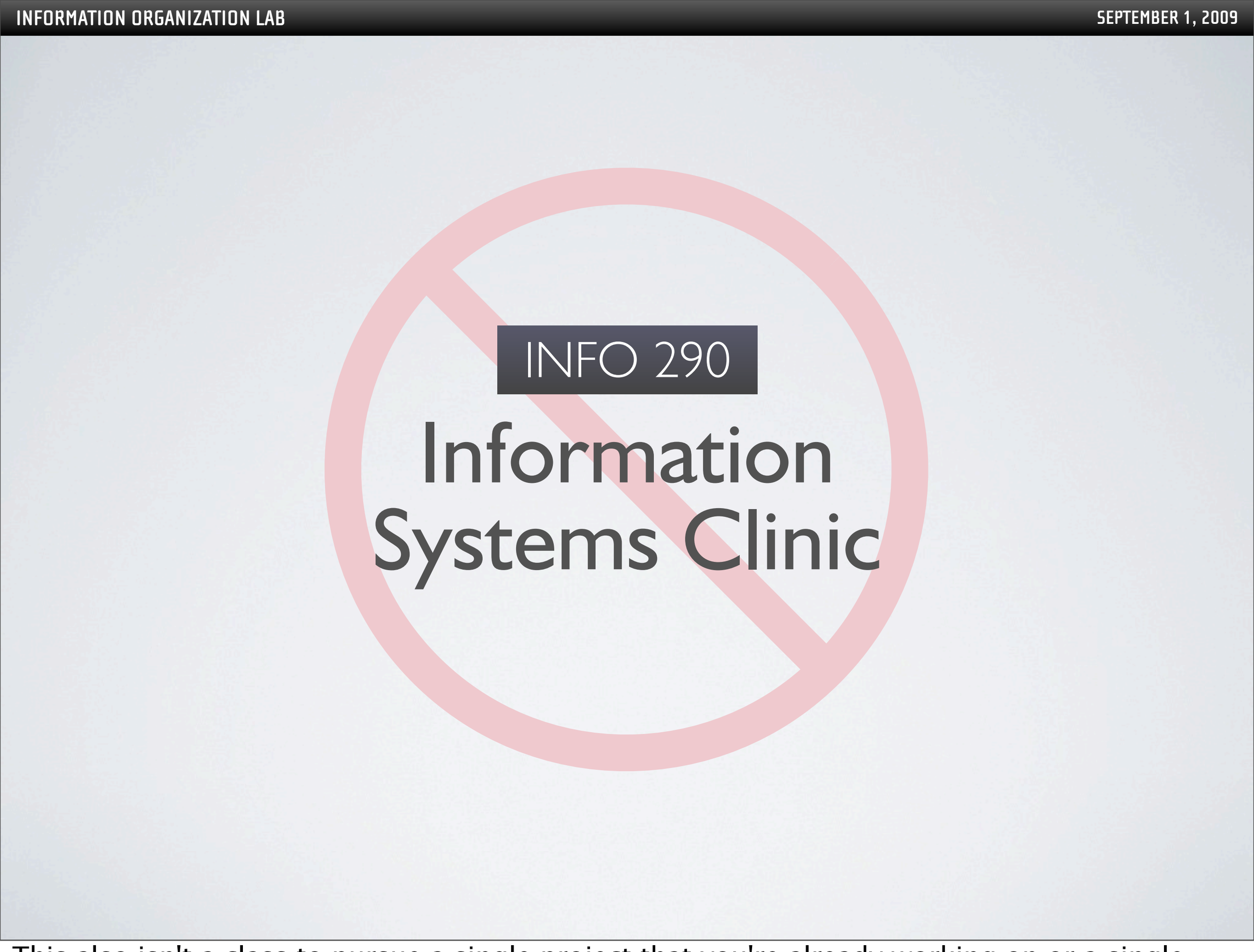
Information Organization & Retrieval

IO Lab isn't part of i202. We're covering similar topics obviously and we'll tie in material and assignments where we can, but you don't need to be part of this class to get a full 202 experience. Similarly you don't need to be taking 202 right now -- this class will work independently.

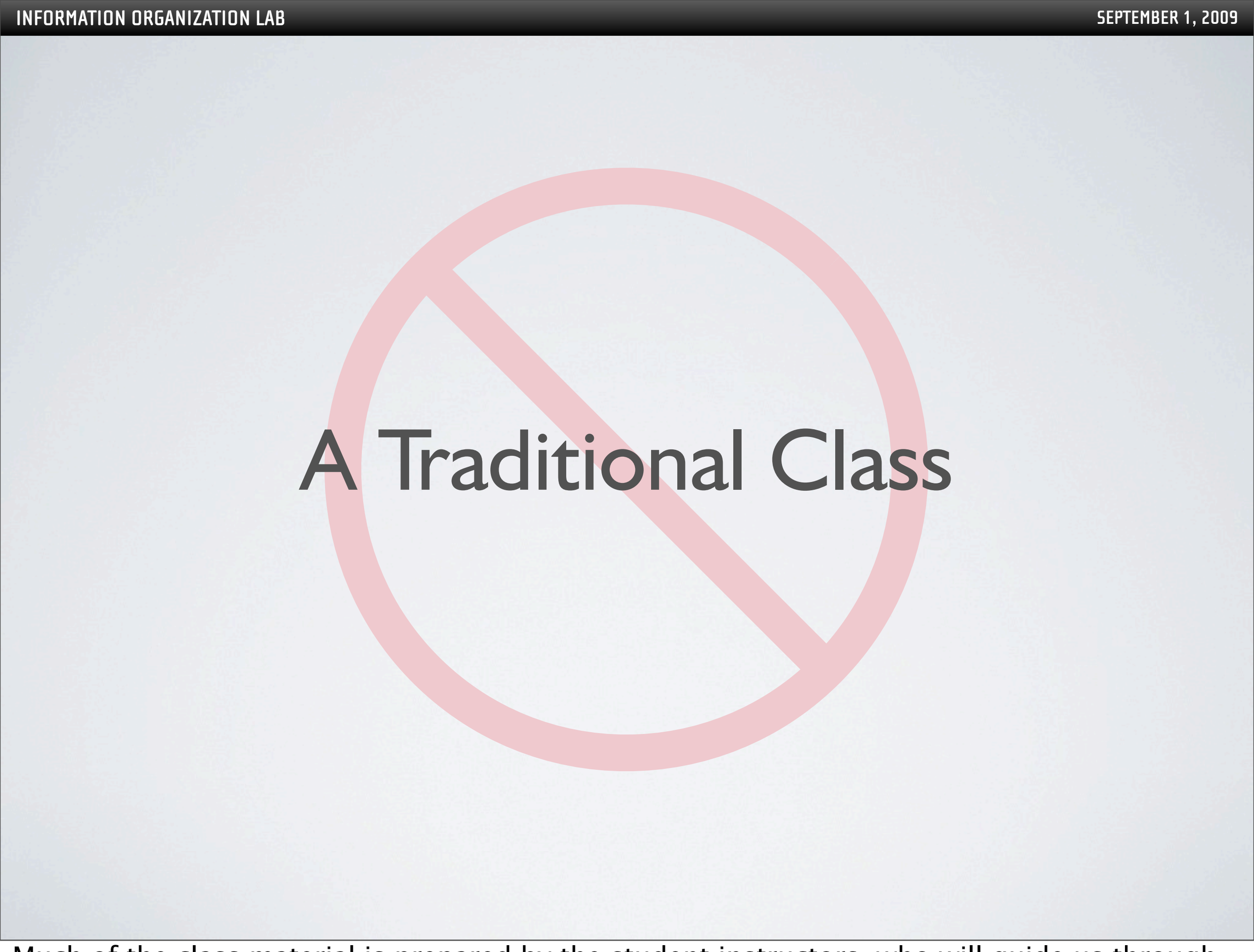
INFO 290

Mixing & Remixing Information

We aren't looking exclusively at mashups of existing services. We want to specifically pursue experiments that test information organization theories and concepts.



This also isn't a class to pursue a single project that you're already working on or a single group project. We're more than open to suggestions for projects, but there are other classes at the iSchool for working on single long-term projects. Doing a single project doesn't give you much practice in rapid iteration and development.



Much of the class material is prepared by the student instructors, who will guide us through the syllabus. This is the first time this course has been taught, and for that reason, we want this to be a collaboration, as any lab should be.

CLASS FORMAT

In each class Ryan, Nick, or another student with some particular expertise will describe a new technology or new concept: explain the theory behind it, how it can be used, what it's good for and give a demo. We'll use any additional time to answer questions, solve problems and work together in groups. This is a lab class, so bring your laptops so you can try things out. When we finish a project, each group will demo their project for the class—we'll discuss and critique each as a group to see what we can learn from each different approach. Our goal is to have a group discussion that provides **constructive criticism** on what worked and what didn't.

SYLLABUS & PROJECTS

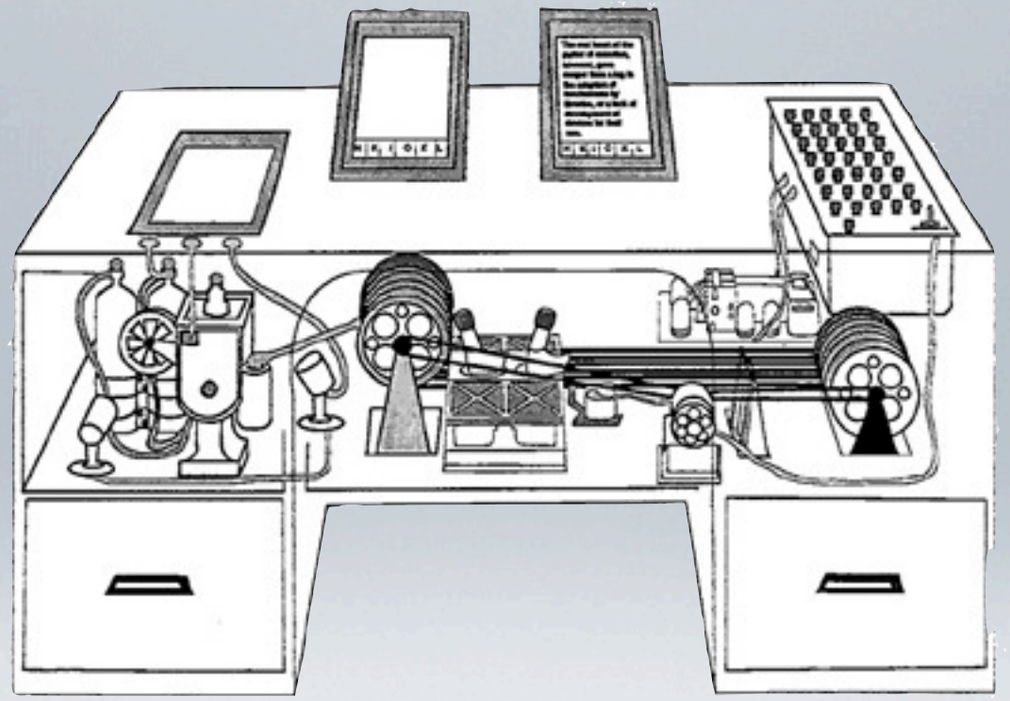
To the browser!

See syllabus at http://courses.ischool.berkeley.edu/i290-4/f09/syllabus.php

GRADING

Class participation is extremely important in a collaborative class. Not just speaking in class, but writing blog posts, using the mailing list. Participation is 30% of your grade. Remaining 70% will be divided evenly between the 5 projects. The first project will be done individually; the remaining projects are group.

QUESTIONS



MEMEX

What are the distinguishing characteristics of the Memex Vannevar Bush proposed in “As We May Think.” (Furniture, index of books, codes to reference other pages, place to enter freehand text, levers to move left and right.)

"AS WE MAY THINK"

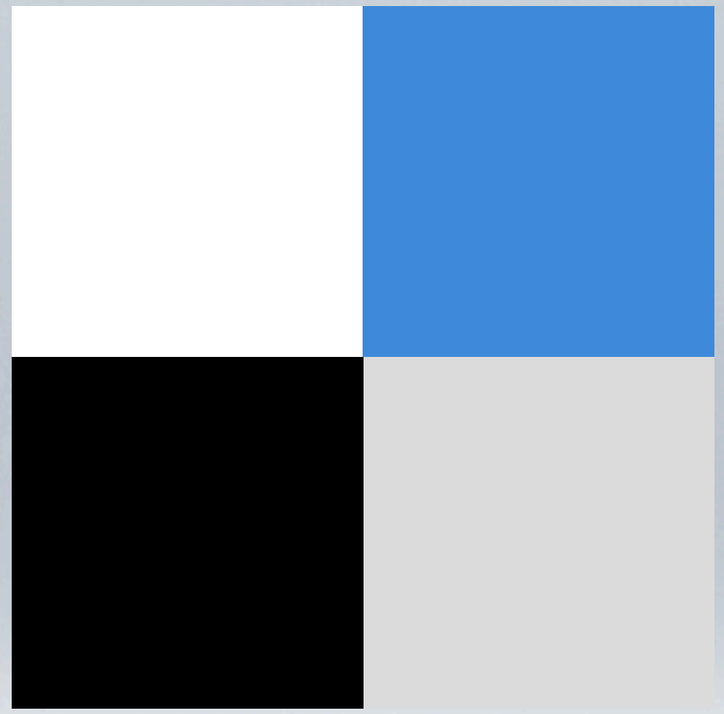
The human mind does not work that way. It operates by association. With one item in its grasp, it snaps instantly to the next that is suggested by the association of thoughts, in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain.

It affords an immediate step, however, to associative indexing, the basic idea of which is a provision whereby any item may be caused at will to select immediately and automatically another. This is the essential feature of the memex. The process of tying two items together is the important thing.

Reference to a **web**, to **association**, to **tagging**, basically. Conflates this "associative" nature to two things: **tagging** (cross-indexing relevant articles for the chemist) and **trails**, narrative ordered lists. Trails, rather than simple links, were a particularly interesting innovation in Bush's description but haven't been as well-implemented.

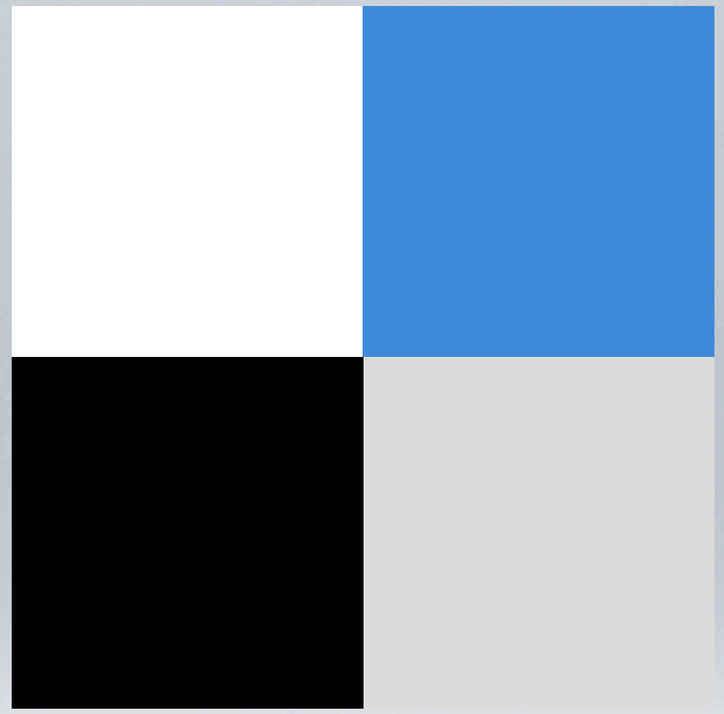
“AS WE MAY THINK”

The owner of the memex, let us say, is interested in the origin and properties of the bow and arrow. Specifically he is studying why the short Turkish bow was apparently superior to the English long bow in the skirmishes of the Crusades. He has dozens of possibly pertinent books and articles in his memex. First he runs through an encyclopedia, finds an interesting but sketchy article, leaves it projected. Next, in a history, he finds another pertinent item, and ties the two together. Thus he goes, building a trail of many items. Occasionally he inserts a comment of his own, either linking it into the main trail or joining it by a side trail to a particular item. When it becomes evident that the elastic properties of available materials had a great deal to do with the bow, he branches off on a side trail which takes him through textbooks on elasticity and tables of physical constants. He inserts a page of longhand analysis of his own. Thus he builds a trail of his interest through the maze of materials available to him.



DEL.ICIO.US

What is Delicious?



DELICIOUS TRAILMAKER

Introduce building the Memex by implementing trails on top of Delicious. Remember that the important part of trails is the **order.**

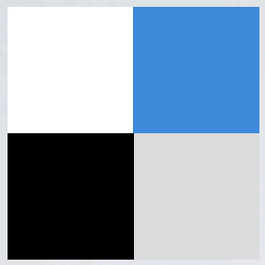
TRAIL SYNTAX

trail:history_of_bows

step:1 step:2 step:3

We're going to build trails using a relatively simple syntax that we'll store as simple tags in Delicious. Demonstration at http://courses.ischool.berkeley.edu/i290-4/f09/resources/delicious_trailmaker.html

FOR NEXT WEEK



Construct the Delicious Trailmaker yourself, following the guide that duplicates our work today.

Install Firefox, Firebug and Greasemonkey for next week's lecture about Javascript tools.

Complete the online skills assessment.

Join the iolab@ischool mailing list.

You can find links to help with all of these on the course website at
http://courses.ischool.berkeley.edu/i290-4/f09/