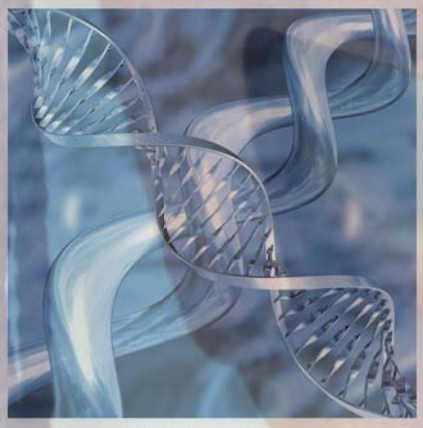
The Human Document Project

to preserve one
document about
mankind for
1 million years



www.humandocument.org

KIST Europe - DFG -

The Long Now Foundation

interdisciplinary workshop

saarbrucken germany

june 30 - july 2, 2010

"The Human Document Project"
How to document our human culture to an intelligent being in 1 million years

Background

Literature, newspapers or science use the internet, paper and written language for documenting their contents and trading it down to the readers. The time scale for this is typically a human generation or much less. Technically speaking, printed paper as such will not necessarily survive very much longer. The computerized modern world has gotten a boost towards storing and accessing much more information. However, this hasn't improved the survival time scale.

Heart beat frequency, body size of the organism and time scales of reaction may correlate. We have developed a civilization which overcame these biological hurdles through, e.g., medicine and technology for self-protection. However, human thinking is mostly limited to short timescales, in its best case to 1-2 generations ahead. Long-term documentation has only occurred related to religion and the idea of "eternal life", or purely by accident. Ancient cultures documented themselves on cave paintings, petroglyphs and rock carvings. Clay plates and large architectural objects have demonstrated lifetimes of thousands of years. At least, that is how it appears to be today. We simply have no evidence of other forms of communication, since most of that has disappeared with time. We can find that Homo erectus or Homo neandertalensis was able to prepare fire, because this is documented in inorganic traces. However, perhaps there was a scientific understanding or expression of art, which may have vanished over the years. How can we know?

What will remain of today's efforts of the arts and sciences, not to speak about the many aspects of everyday life, in say 1,000,000 years?

It may be comparable to the remains we currently have of Homo erectus and his lifestyle. Computers will have corroded (except a few silicon chips), paper is all gone, houses disappeared and with it most other items we use in everyday life. Of course, we can hope for a community which trades down information as the medieval monasteries did in copying Aristoteles' books. However, we have no guarantee that there will be a smooth transition or continuous development in Homo sapiens, as we can observe in the last 1 million years. Historians speak of hundreds of years, archaeologists of 100,000s of years and astronomers or geologists handle the real time scales, which we currently believe play no role for Homo sapiens. That might be wrong. In a similar way as there was centuries of debate about geocentric vs. heliocentric viewpoint for astronomy, there could be a debate about relevant timescales... We may not have a (very geological) prehistory of much more than 1 million years, but we may have a future of intelligent life on this planet of much more! I am not saying that it will be Homo sapiens, it might as well be another humanoid species, another mammal or even social insects... Speculation of that kind is to be avoided, but I am sure you get my point...

(opinion, Andreas Manz, June 2009, updated February 2010)

Topics

what is human culture? what to include? top achievements or everyday life? textbooks? wikipedia? opinion? controversial topics? different geographical origins.

how to document? language? line drawings? binary code? films and music?

teaching through multiple languages? primary school textbooks? scientific encoding tables?

where to put it? in a museum, visible to all? billions of copies? on the moon? in a desert or a city center? near geographically defined spots, Mariana trench, Ayers rock, Easter island? Gizeh, Xi'an, Stonehenge?

how to structure the document? linear text? large number of small chapters? puzzle?

how to integrate a clock? radioactive isotopes? describing astronomical events?

on what material? monocrystalline silicon? embedding in amber? DNA of a living organism?

(organisation will protocol the brainstorming and discussions. will draft a white paper - goals and structure - and a road map - tasks and who will start it)

The workshop will take place in the facilities of KIST Europe at Saarbrücken (Germany). The plan is, to provide a dozen invited talks from a variety of disciplines, to allow contributed oral presentations, and to perform brainstorming and discussion sessions in small groups or plenary. Sessions will start on June 30, 2010 at lunchtime and will end with a plenary panel wrap-up on July 2nd, 2010 at lunchtime. Two morning sessions, two afternoon sessions and two evening sessions are on the program, including meals and social elements.

Location

KIST Europe is located at the East end of the university campus. www.kist-europe.de Address for GPS would be Stuhlsatzenhausweg 97, 66123 Saarbrücken. It can be reached by air (Luxembourg, Frankfurt), by train (Paris, Frankfurt, Mannheim) or by car. Some low-cost airlines may also be convenient (Saarbrücken, Zweibrücken, Frankfurt-Hahn). Accommodation is easily available at Saarbrücken, and some convenient or very nice hotels will be recommended on the website at www.humandocument.org or can be found at www.hrs.de.

Contributed papers

Abstracts or descriptions of contributed talks should please be sent to info@humandocument.org before June 5th, 2010. Expect a decision and reply within 2 weeks.

Attendees

should register through info@humandocument.org until June 26, 2010 and pay the registration fee of EUR 150 in cash at the registration desk, please. Registration is very important for our planning of discussions in small groups, and for catering. The number of attendees is limited to about 60 and the organisers may close the registration.

Invited Speakers / Discussion Leaders

Michael D. Fischer, Professor of Anthropology and Computing, the University of Kent at Canterbury, UK

Leo Depuydt, Professor of Egyptology & Ancient Western Asian Studies, Brown University, Rhode Island, USA

Laura Welcher, Director of The Rosetta Project, The Long Now Foundation, San Francisco, USA

Seong-Kon Kim, Professor of English Literature, Seoul National University, Korea

Martin Hilpert, Junior Fellow of Linguistics, FRIAS, University of Freiburg, Germany

Ant Miller, Senior Research Manager, Strategic Archives Research, BBC Research & Development, London, UK

Xárene Eskandar, Media Artist and Researcher, Design Media Arts and GSEIS, University of California, Los Angeles, USA

Jennifer Tillotson, Senior Research Fellow, Fashion & Textiles Design, Cambridge and London, UK

Stephen Quake, Professor of Bioengineering, Investigator, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Stanford University, USA

Günter Fuhr, Professor of Biophysics, Fraunhofer Institute for Biomedical Technology, St.Ingbert and Berlin, Germany

Leon Abelmann, Professor of Systems and Materials for Information Storage, Twente University, The Netherlands

Hideaki Koizumi,Board Member of Directors, Hitachi, Ltd., Tokyo, Japan

Ingrid Weiss, Head Biomineralization, INM, Saarbrücken, Germany

Andreas Manz (chairman), Professor of Analytical Sciences, KIST Europe, Saarbrücken, Germany

Miko Elwenspoek (co-chairman), Professor of Transducers Science and Technology, Twente University, The Netherlands

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