

Mundaneum

How Hypermedia Looked in 1934

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Objective of Infographic

Sharing Paul Otlet's dream about Mundaneum - a kind of hypermedia system that allowed the management and sharing of all human knowledge in the 30's.

Contents: What will you find here?



Otlet's Intention

How Otlet became obsessed with cataloguing and classifying the Universal knowledge: the creation of **Universal Bibliographic Repertory (RBU)**, with his colleague Henri La Fontaine.



Organizing the World:

Systems, principles and machines created by Otlet and La Fontaine to organize the huge documents and index cards in the RBU. The creation of a highly flexible language management system for databases: **The Universal Decimal Classification (UCD)**, the first modern faceted classification system, in opposition of Melvil Dewey's Decimal Classification.



Mundaneum:

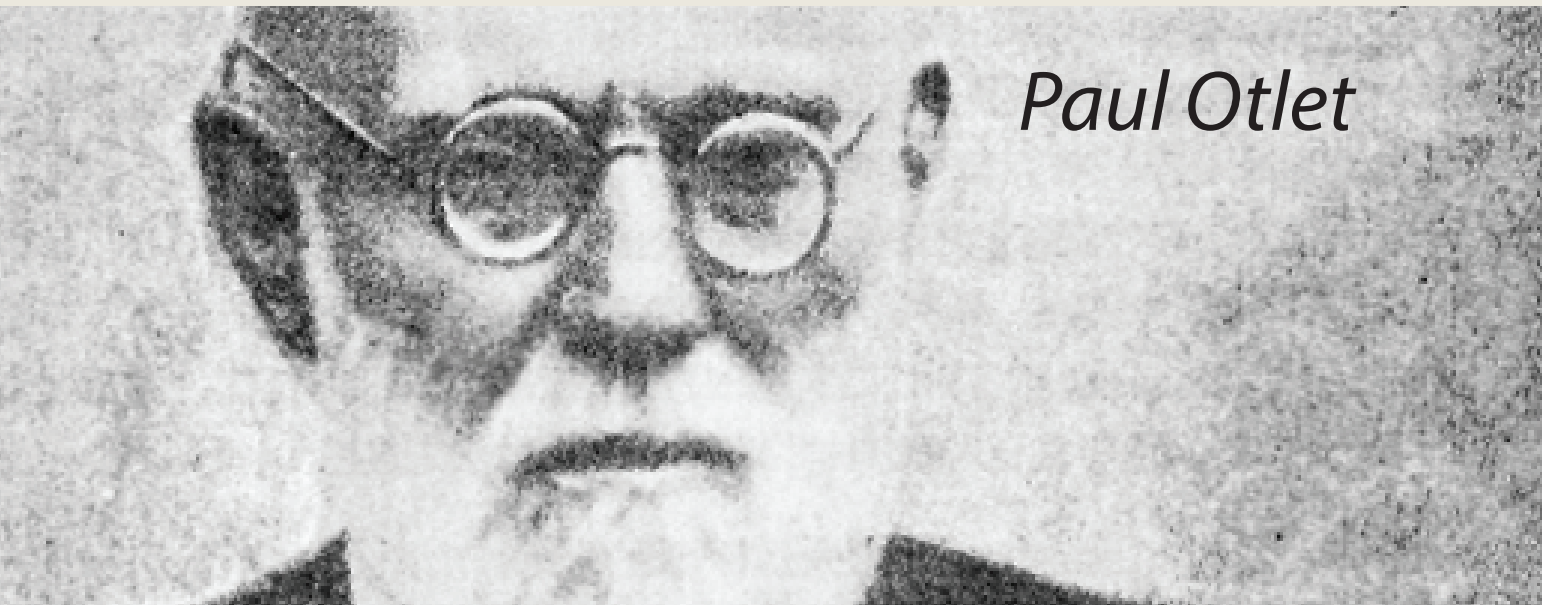
Palais Mondial / World Palace.

The end of paper and book to organize and disseminate human knowledge: The organized and immediate transmission of all intellectual creations and scientific discovers. How Otlet foresaw an **Universal Network for Information and Documentation.**



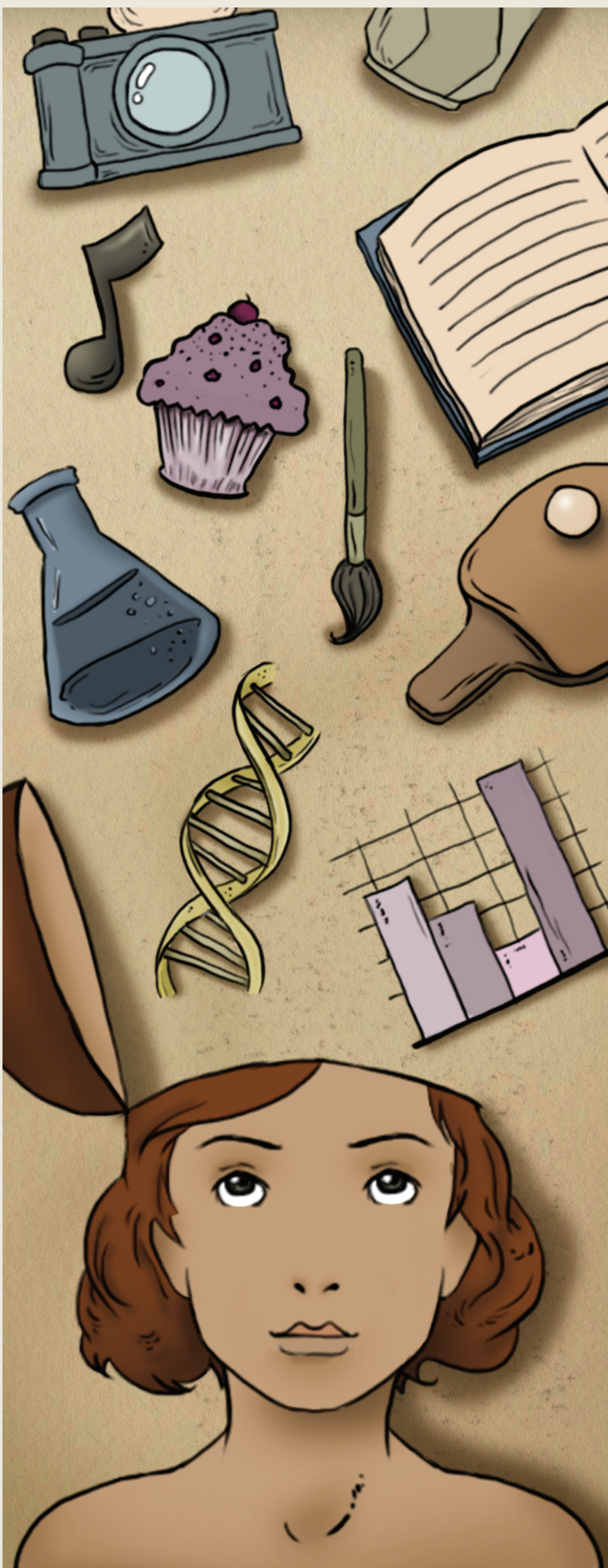
Timeline with Relevant Facts

A. Otlet's Intention



Paul Otlet

Otlet said "I think in terms of Universal". He and Henri La Fontaine decided they could collect data from all books that had already been published, as well as a great collection of journal articles, photographs, posters and all kinds of fleeting objects, like pamphlets that formal librarians used to ignore. Using index cards - at this time the most advanced way to storage information, they created a huge database containing more than 12 millions of entries - The Universal Bibliographic Repertory. An Encyclopedic Bibliography that contained all the published human knowledge.



1. The things of the World

The universe, the reality and the cosmos. The intelligences that are scattered and fragmentized in people's mind.



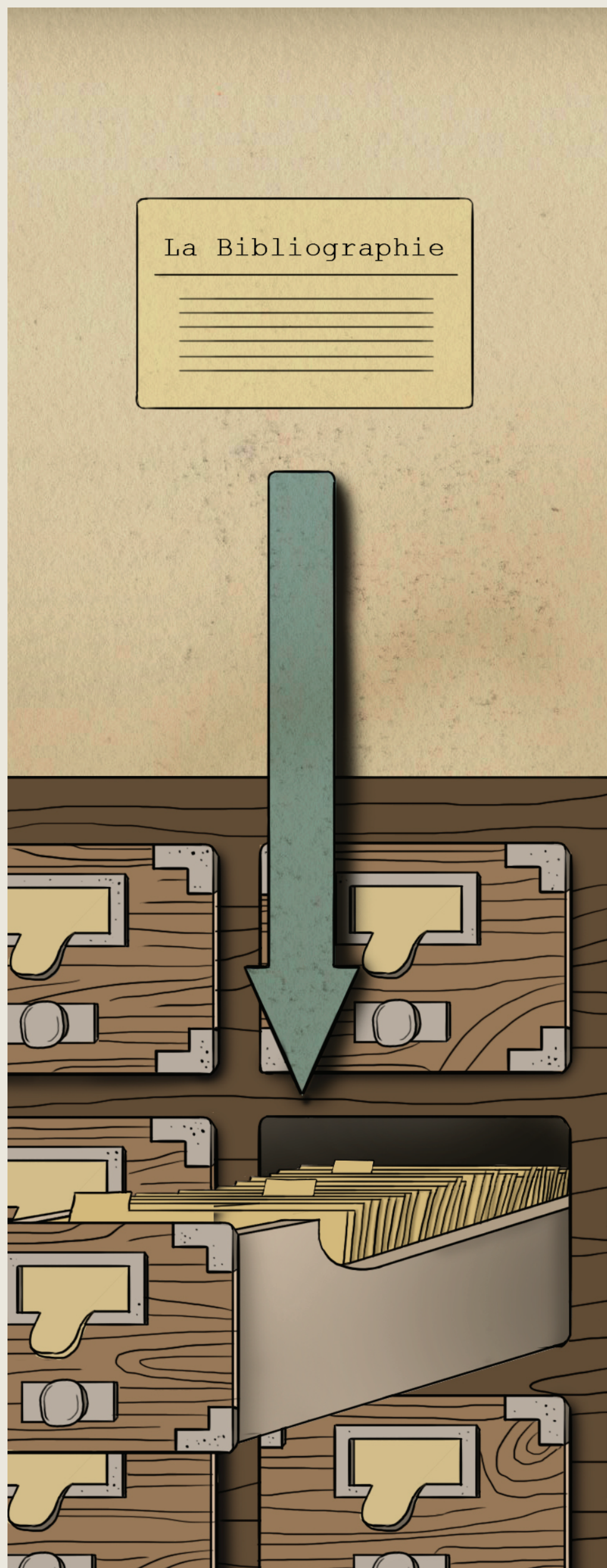
2. The Science

Englobes and coordinates the thoughts of people, of every singular intelligence.



3. The Collection of books constitutes the Library

To transcribe and photograph Science according to an order of knowledge classification.

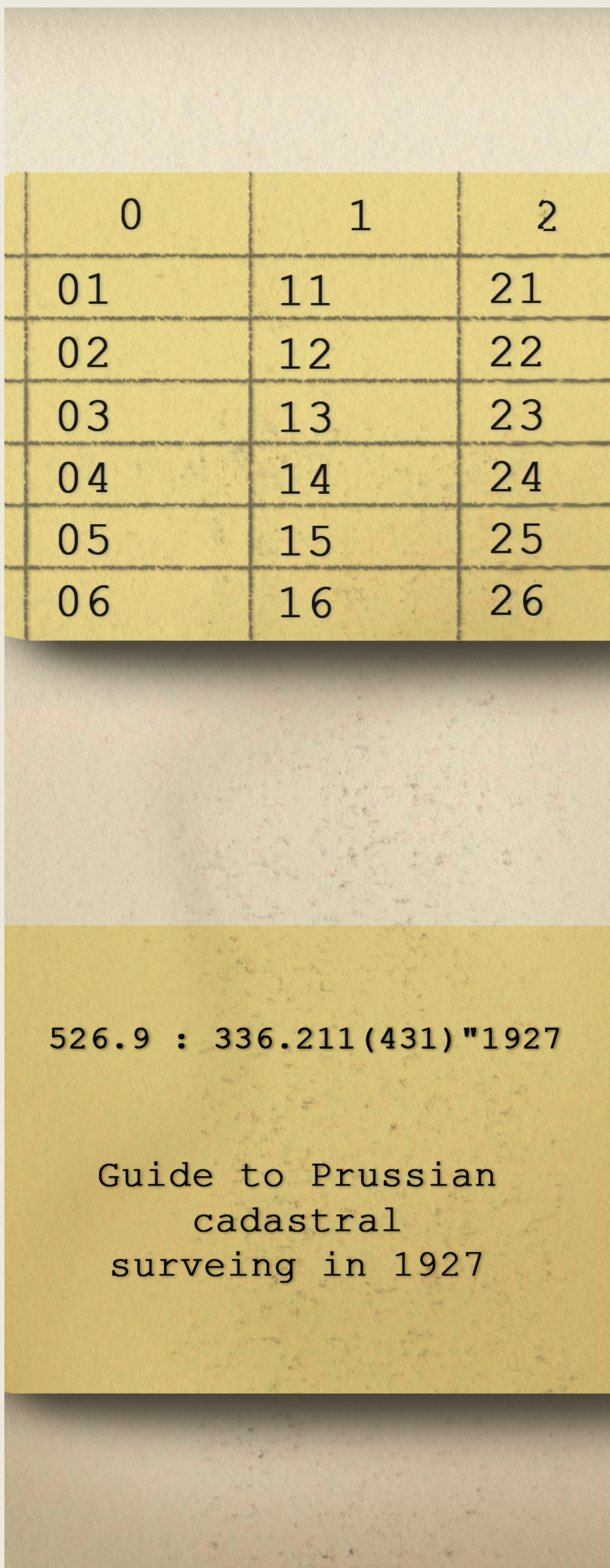


4. The Universal Bibliographic Repertoire

An inventory and catalogue of the books, the assemblage of all bibliographies articles create the Universal Bibliographic Repertoire.

5. The Monographic Principle

Concentrates and coordinates relevant meaning and content of the books and can generate others inputs such as Encyclopedias, Dossiers, Atlas, Microfilms.



6. The Universal Decimal Classification (UDC)

The international classification scheme that classifies the things according to the Science found in all the books in its Bibliographu and Encyclopedias.

E. Mundaneum: Palais Mondial / World Palace



He imagined a future without paper, where the technological devices of his time such as phonograph, radio, tv and telephone would substitute the book

In fact they would become a new book, the most powerful device for the diffusion of human thoughts. This would be a broadcast library, a televised book. The Palais Mondial - Mundaneum - Word Palace was a universal body of documentation, as an encyclopedia survey of human knowledge, and Otlet also wrote and created systems for something resembling an analogic hypermedia, the International Network for Universal Documentation.

He outlined these grand vision of easily accessible knowledge and interconnected data many decades before Vannevar Bush, Ted Nelson and Tim Beer Lee first articulated this.

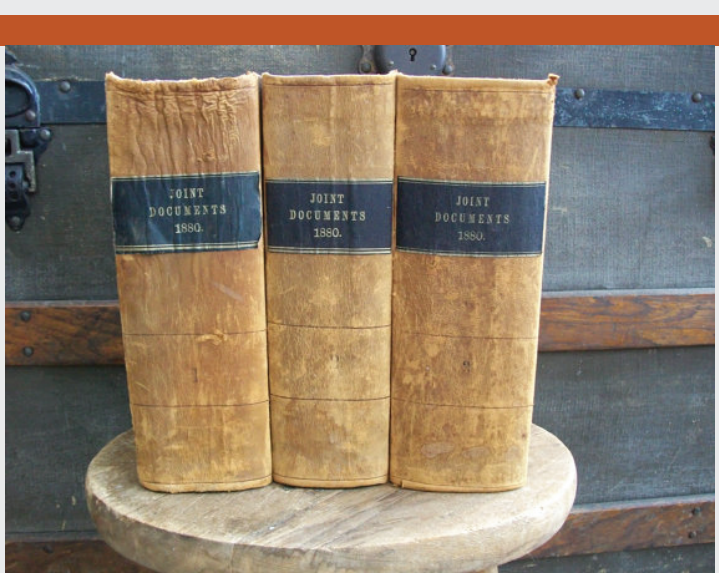
Otlet and La Fontaine built an analog hypertext system, they collected and catalogued as much bibliographic knowledge as they could and crossed-indexed it into innumerable rows of card trays.

At its peak they had 17 million index cards spread throughout a system of search and retrieval.

The universal book was part of the Universal City, which was a part of the universal storage of all human knowledge or what we called Mundaneum. Mundaneum contained all books, articles, memories and published information in the World. These would become chapters of a single and immense book, the book of Universal Science, its one book made up of individual books that should be available to Everybody.

Otlet and La Fontaine were peace activists and this project of knowledge broadcast was part of a bigger project: the creation of the World City which would allow the dissemination of the human thinking throughout the World aiming World Peace.

D. Timeline with Relevant Facts



The Universal Decimal Classification

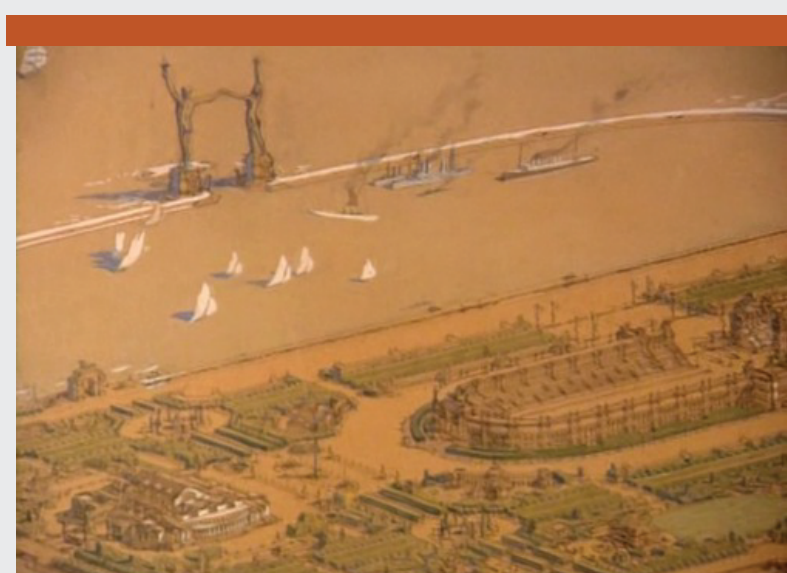
1868 - 1880

Paul Otlet was born in August 23, 1868 in Brussels, Belgium. When he was a child, Otlet was marvelled by library catalogues. He didn't attend regular schools, because his father believed that it limited creative potential.



1890 - 1906

Together with Henry La Fontaine he created the Universal Bibliographic Repertory. The Index Card Catalogue 3 x 5, the Universal Decimal Classification and also developed policies to reach the international cooperation that was demanded for such an International Institute of Bibliography, something like an International and Universal Library.



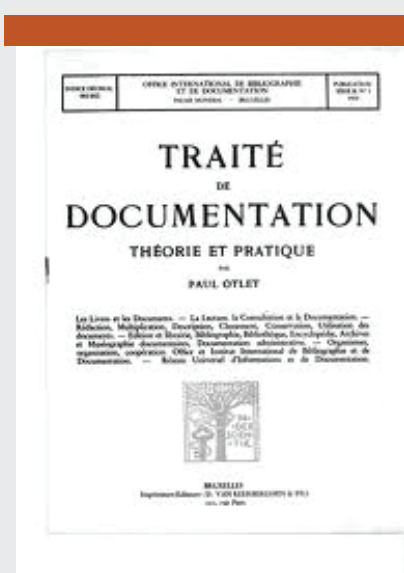
The creation of Palais Mondial / Mundaneum / World City

1910 - 1930



To ensure its place as host city for the League of Nations and also focusing on Otlet and La Fontaine suggestions to help get World Peace, the Belgian Government created The City of Knowledge, where there was a building similar to a museum where all the information of human knowledge would be recorded and disseminated. The famous architect Le Corbusier created a gigantic building draft. Back then, Otlet and La Fontaine fostered several events for International Bibliographic Cooperation, like the International Conference of International Associations which created the Union of International Associations (UIA) in 1910.

Mundaneum had a mail research service and Otlet thought of different ways to use new technologies to improve the process. In the end of 1934, Mundaneum had reached over 15 million index cards distributed within a huge bibliographic repertory of human knowledge from different parts of the world.



The Fallen of Mundaneum and Otlet's Legacies

1934 - 1944

Mundaneum was shut down for not having financial profit and also because of its pacifist idealism. Geneva became the League of Nations host city and the government slowly dropped financial support to Otlet's project. When the Nazis invaded Belgium some years later the troops destroyed millions of index cards and archives to make an art exhibit for the Third Reich.

Nevertheless, also in 1934 he published "Treat on Documentation", the book about the book, where he explained all his ideas about the remote broadcast of information, including a special record for social use of

the records as a record itself, containing meaningful and enriching relations among the documents resulting in a more intelligent catalogue.

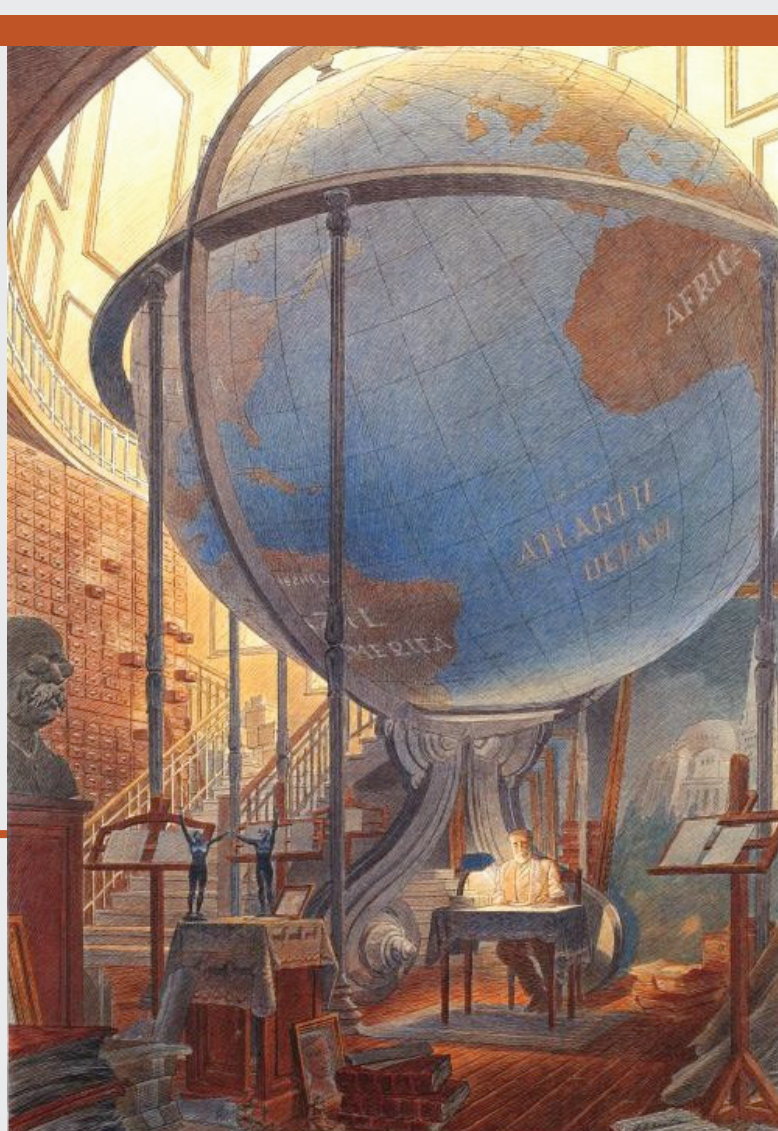
Paul Otlet died, and so did his ideas dimmed by the cultural emergency of the Second World War.

Rediscovery of Paul Otlet

1968 - Now

Paul Otlet is rediscovered by the graduate student, Boyd Rayward who is his biographer nowadays. The museum is rebuilt, in an attempt to recover Mundaneum's knowledge, as well as to make an homage to Paul Otlet.

Studies about his scientific discoveries began and Google created a virtual museum to pay him an homage.



Paul Otlet:

...a machinery unaffected by distance which combined at the same time radio, x-rays, cinema and microscopic photography. Everything in the universe and everything related to humans were registered no matter where they had been created. Thus the moving image of the world would be established - it's memory, it's true duplicate. From afar anyone would be able to read any passage, expanded or limited by the desirable subject, that would be projected onto his individual screen, Thus in his armchair, anyone would be able to contemplate the whole of creation or particular parts of it.

Paul Otlet (1935).
Monde: Essai d'universalisme:
Connaissances du monde. Sentimentes du monde. Action organisée à plan du monde (Editiones Mundaneum). Bruxelles: D. Van Kleeberghen et fils.