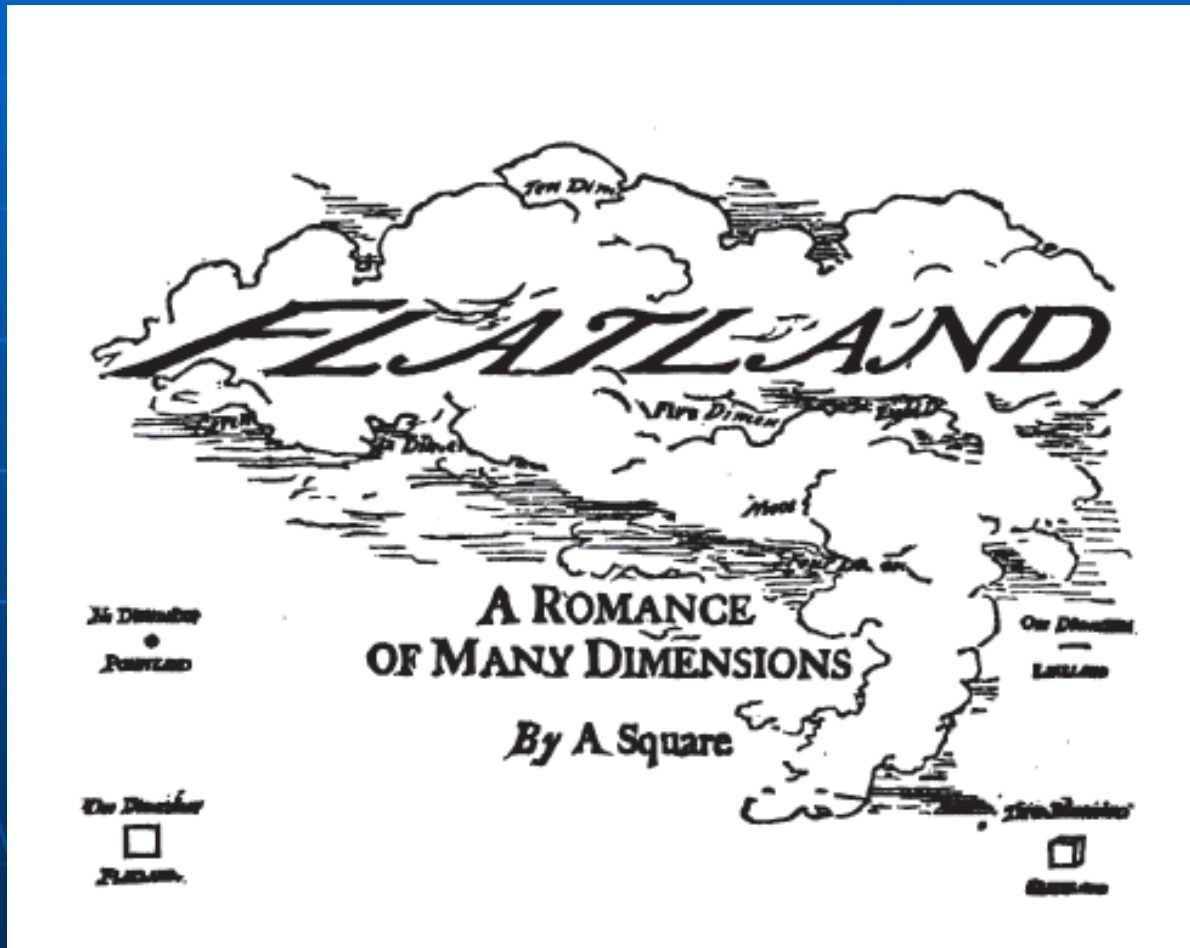# Flatland to Virtual Transcendence & the Digital Dimension

Richard Pearce-Moses

Deputy Director for Technology and Information Resources

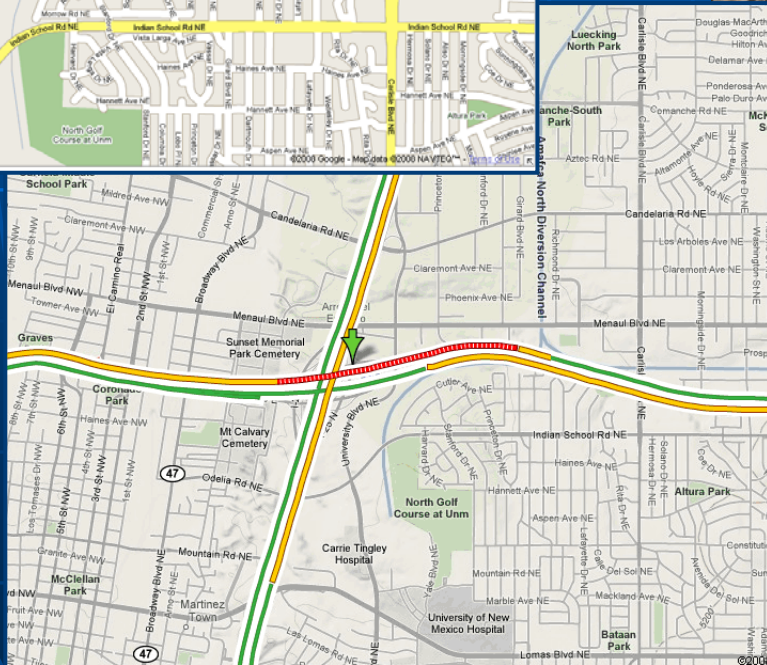Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records
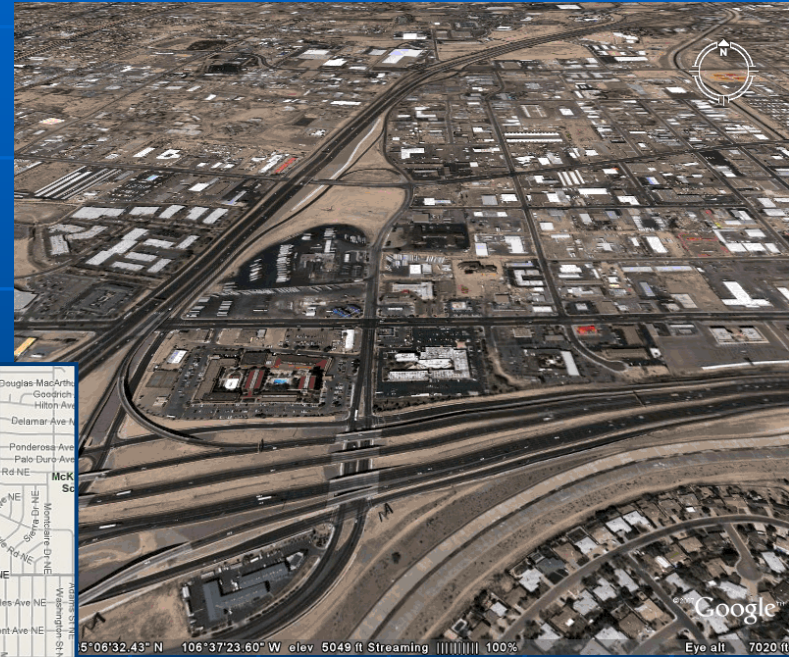
Flatland to Virtual

FLATLAND

A ROMANCE
OF MANY DIMENSIONS

By A. Square

Crossing the Boundary

- Lawlessness
  Lack of standards

- Rugged individualism
  Proprietary formats

Terra Incognito

The New World
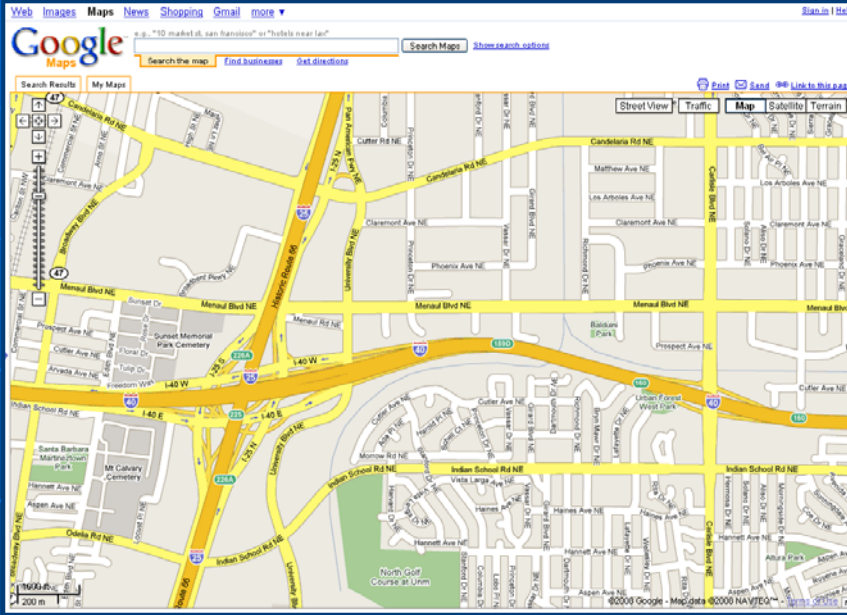
The Web
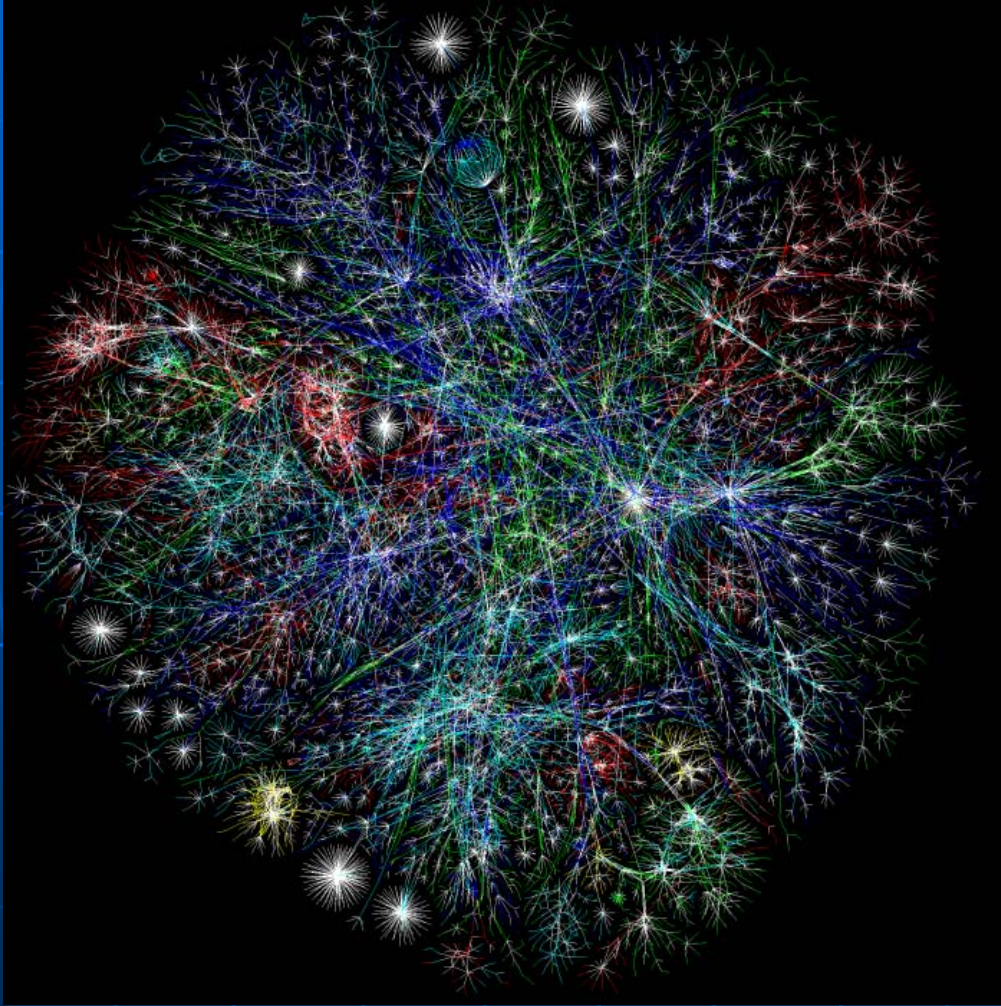
Asia/Pacific (red)

Europe/Middle East/
Central Asia/Africa
(green)

Latin America /
Caribbean (yellow)

North America (blue)

www.opte.org
22 November 2003

Looking Forward

A Map of Utopia, from Thomas More's *Utopia*

Retrospective

Timothy O'Sullivan, 1868

Mark Klett, 1979

Research

- Focused
  - Tunnel vision
- Academic
  - Theoretical, esoteric rather than practical
- Scattered
  - Hard to find good entry points
- Requires knowledge of IT
  - Language barriers

Practice

- Problems are hard to solve
  - Denial and avoidance

- Resistance to change
  - Procrastination

- No clear best practices

Putting the Pieces Together:
A Curatorial Rationale

Integrated

Scalable

Systematic

Selection

Acquisition

Processing

Storage

Reference & Access

Preservation

Integrated Solutions

- Workflows & business processes

- Concept of operations (IEEE 1362-1998)
  - Current situation
  - Proposed system
  - Operational scenarios
  - Impacts

Scalability

- 19th century historical manuscripts tradition
  - Item-by-item

- 20th records management
  - Series and aggregates

- Digital era
  - Automated business rules

Systematic Management

- Consistency
  - Disregard idiosyncrasies

- Abstraction
  - Focus on common traits

- Reduce complexity
  - Simplify, simplify, simplify

Developing a Curatorial Rationale

- Rethinking fundamentals
  - Why do we do what we do?

What is a record? 1992

- A document created or received and maintained by an agency, organization, or individual in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business.

What is a record? 2005

1. A written or printed work of a legal or official nature that may be used as evidence or proof; a document.

2. Data or information that has been fixed on some medium; that has content, context, and structure; and that is used as an extension of human memory or to demonstrate accountability.

3. Data or information in a fixed form that is created or received in the course of individual or institutional activity and set aside (preserved) as evidence of that activity for future reference.

4. An instrument filed for public notice (constructive notice); see recordation.

What is a record?

- A record is information in fixed form that is used as evidence of the past.

- Recorded information regardless of media or characteristics. (SAA, 1974)

The Value of Records

- Fixity
  - Unchanging reference from the past

- Trustworthiness
  - Authentic
  - Reliable
  - Complete
  - Accurate

Developing a Curatorial Rationale

- Rethinking fundamentals
  - Why do we do what we do?

- Reengineering best practices
  - How do we achieve those ends in the new world?

Email

- The real problem
  - PBB: People Behaving Badly
- The records management problem
  - Disposing of messages of no continuing value
  - Preserving those with continuing value
- Conventional wisdom
  - Classify
  - Schedule

Email – New Approaches

- Basic archival principle
  - Rely on the record creator's original order

- Attempts to change record creators' behavior will fail

- Macro appraisal
  - Retention based on creator's role in agency

Developing a Curatorial Rationale

- Rethinking fundamentals
  - Why do we do what we do?

- Reengineering best practices
  - How do we achieve those ends in the new world?

- Becoming comfortable and fluent
  - How do we adapt?

Understand the Materials

- Affordances
  - Of paper
  - Of digital media

- Forms and functions
  - Email, blogs, websites
  - Databases, geographic information systems

Learn the Tools of the Trade

- Acquisition
  - Physical media, network protocols
- Processing
  - Middleware
- Reference
  - Database queries
- Preservation
  - Format migration

New Skills for a Digital Era

- IT includes many specializations

- Different records professionals need different IT skills

- Records professionals need soft and hard skills

- The more IT skills, the better

Curatorial Rationale

- Systematic administration
- Integrates ingest, processing, storage, discovery, preservation
- Scales to the number of records
- Built on new understanding of fundamentals
- Finds new ways to work
- Matches the materials
- Relevant to the specific context

Moving Forward . . .

To a Happier Ending

- Records professionals have something important to bring to the table

  - The nature of records as evidence of the past

  - The importance of authenticity, reliability, completeness, and accuracy in a recordkeeping system

Find Time

- What are your priorities?

- Is digital information a priority?

- What do you spend time on now?

- What should you spend time on?

Read Something Interesting

- Abigail Sellen & Richard Harper, *The Myth of the Paperless Office*

- Thomas Davenport, *Information Ecology*

- JoAnne Yates, *Control through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management*

Learn About the Materials

- David Levy, *Scrolling Forward: Making Sense of Documents in the Digital Age*

- James Gleich, *What Just Happened: A Chronicle from the Information Frontier*

- John Seely Brown & Paul Duguid, *The Social Life of Information*

Learn New Skills

- New Skills for a Digital Era Proceedings

- University of Arizona
  School of Information Resources & Library Science
  Digital Information Management Certificate

- W3 Schools
  http://www.w3schools.com/default.asp

- Community colleges

Just Do It

Whatever we do, we may fail.

But if we do nothing, failure is guaranteed.

– Fynnette Eaton

Richard Pearce-Moses

Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records

rpm @ lib.az.us