Addendum:
It seems that in writing up this bit on the concept, I forgot to describe what my actual concept is. Basically, I am trying to implement a scaled down version of Bush's memex. The basic idea is that as a user clicks on links and travels through my text, a visual “map” of his journey is created. The user can then edit this map, deleting links that he doesn’t find useful and adding others. A more visual explanation of this concept can be found by looking at my concept drawings. (The link is on the previous web page).

Original text:
Tim Berners-Lee - 1994

Berners-Lee talks about many of the technologies comprising the World Wide Web. In particular, he talks about URI’s, HTTP, and HTML. These things are so commonplace to me today that they are a part of my everyday existence. Most people are familiar with these things, if not the acronym itself then at least the technology. In that light, this will by my introduction page, to give the audience a frame of reference.

Some time around 1997, I was introduced to the World Wide Web, and my life changed forever. It started slowly at first - so slowly I didn't even notice it. I still have my first e-mail message, dated May 13, 1997, subject: "Welcome New Hotmail User!" In those days, I didn’t use the internet much, and my parents didn't use it at all, so having it at home was out of the question. I had to drive up to school library in the evenings in order to log on. I didn't even know that much about it. But slowly, my knowledge increased and I used it more and more. Within two years, I was on the internet every day. It is hard to believe that at one point someone had to teach me what to do. It is like second nature to me now. Whenever I need to know something I go to the internet. What is the weather like? Go to www.weather.com. Want to know more about current news? Get stories directly off the AP Wire. Trying to figure out where you've seen that celebrity before? Go to imdb.com and find out. Webmd, amazon, ebay

Vanevar Bush - 1945

Bush describes a machine he calls the “memex.” He says, “A memex is a device in which an individual stores all his books, records, and communications, and which is mechanized so that it may be consulted with exceeding speed and flexibility. It is an enlarged intimate supplement to his memory.”

With the memex, the user can jump to any item using an index, just like in a book. We currently have excellent indexing technologies available. Take Google, for example. The index for this search engine includes more than 3 billion URLs. If you want to know it, Google can probably find it for you.

The next step in the memex is one that neither Google nor (to my knowledge) anyone else has been able to implement practically. This step is one whereby the user can define his own connections between items, instead of being stuck with the ones inserted by the author. Certainly searching with Google returns a plethora of related items, but the
returned results are often changing. There is no guarantee that two links you thought went very well together will be close together on the results list in a couple of months.

To implement this next step practically would require some sort of software running on the individual user’s computer. (I will say computer instead of the microfilm desk that Bush envisioned). Then the user could create connections between URLs and even between documents stored on his computer. There might be a problem with the fact that URLs are constantly changing, going out of date, or disappearing completely. In this case, the user might elect to save a copy of the page locally (much like Google’s cache). The problem that arises here is one of hard drive space.

Marcel Duchamp

Duchamp took an ordinary toilet, called it “Fountain,” and submitted it unchanged to an art exhibit. His point was that the object was important because he chose it. It did not matter whether he created it, or even altered it in some way, or not; the object had a significance to him, thus giving it a new context.

And so people create works by reference. They put things that they have found in a new context, or in the same context, or occasionally with no changes at all. Several websites have mirror sites. Some websites are translated into various languages. These then have both an original author and a translator.

Ted Nelson - 1998

Nelson describes eerily well the circumstances that surrounded the rise of the .com’s and that, less than two years later would lead to their downfall. He says, “...we have not a state of progress but a state of virtually total confusion. Never before have so many accepted the unrefined technical fantasies of so few. Never before has so much been spent for what has been so little understood or thought out.”

He also describes three types of nonsequential writing: chunk style hypertext, windowing text, and windowing hypertext. Chunk style hypertext is what the majority of web pages use today. Each web page presents a chunk of information and includes links to other chunks of information. Windowing text combines text from different sources and puts them on the same page. Windowing hypertext is exactly the same as windowing text, except that the windows contain links to other windows.

Some of the best examples of windowing hypertext can be found in the various price comparison sites. Take for example www.bigwords.com, where one can comparison shop for new and used textbooks, or www.dealtime.com, where one can comparison shop for almost anything. Using either of these sites, you enter in the name or ID of the product you want. The site will then contact the websites of various other companies to find out what price they are selling the item for. Finally all the information is compiled and presented to you, the user. You can then link to the site you like the best and buy the item.
Jean Baudrillard

"The era of hyperreality now begins." Things that used to be done in real life are now done electronically. Video games are the most pervasive example of this hyperreality. There are simulated sports and RPGs. At www.neopets.com, there are millions of people who have virtual pets. You can even lead a virtual life with “The Sims” series of games, in which you control functions as mundane as eating and going to the restroom.

Baudrillard also discusses the loss of private space. He uses as an example the radio, where there are occasionally too many frequencies, and they interfere with each other. There is too much information, and the message you were looking for is lost. The same applies to the internet and television. In regards to the internet, there is simply too much information. A search on Google turns up hundreds, or even thousands of links, which may or may not be related to what you are looking for. The world of television is getting crazy now, too. In the era of digital cable and satellite networks, there are hundreds of channels available. In addition to the regular network stations, there are specialty niche channels (i.e. Food Network and TechTV); multiple news, sports, and movie channels; and even music channels that have no picture at all. There are so many channels available that by the time you sort through the listings and find something you want to watch, you've already missed a good portion of it.

Jorge Luis Borges

In Borges’s “The Garden of Forking Paths” he describes two mazes. One of these mazes is the traditional kind. It is the kind of life-size maze that one can walk through. The other maze is in a book, and it is a maze of time. Several chapters in the book start at the same point in time. Just like in the physical maze, where one must make a choice at each intersection and only follow one, so in the book the reader can only read one chapter at a time and must choose one. Even though all of the chapters exist all of the time, and so all paths through time exist simultaneously, a person is only capable of following along a single path at a time.

I am reminded of the “Back to the Future” movie series. In the original movie, Marty McFly goes back in time and accidentally changes events so that his parents don’t meet the way they are supposed to. Then he has to work to get them together so that the path through time doesn’t change too much and he will still be born in the “future.” In the end, his parents don’t meet the way they originally did, but they still end up together. Borges describes this concept as converging paths of time.

In the second movie, Marty goes forward in time, just to see what the future is like. Unbeknownst to him, while he is in the future, someone steals the time machine to go back in time and change things. (The person returns it before Marty ever notices it is gone.) When Marty goes back to his time, he finds it completely altered. Then he has to go back in time to stop the event that was changed in the first place in order to get things back to the way they were. This movie shows how the different paths through time all exist at the same time. Marty simply travels around on these different paths.