Internet Archive Blogs

A blog from the team at archive.org

Ted Nelson and Zigzag

Posted on December 8, 2010 by jeff kaplan

One of the great things about the Internet Archive is the sense of adventure. There are always creative ideas bouncing around. Many of them come to fruition and occasionally some fail. In the spirit of innovation the inimitable Ted Nelson just finished up a month long code sprint with some guest programmers to bring to life one of his visionary concepts, Zigzag.

About Zigzag (from Mr. Nelson's Xanadu website):

"We believe the computer world can be simplified and unified. Today, ordinary people must deal with an appalling variety of programs and mechanisms to maintain their information. We have discovered a new simplification based on one simple concept: a new, liberated form of data that shows itself in wild new ways.

Conventional data structures— especially tables and arrays— are confined structures created from a rigid top-down specification that enforces regularity and rectangularity. But this structure (our trademark is ZigZag®) is created from individual relations, bottom-up; it can be irregular and unlimited. Its uses range from database and spreadsheet to unifying the internals of large-scale software."

At the end of the month, on November 24, Ted Nelson and Team Zigzag (Edward Betts, Ted Nelson, Marlene Mallicoat, Art Medlar, Andrew Pam, Jeffrey Ventrella) presented a working prototype of Zigzag. You can see the presentation at http://www.archive.org/details /zigzagpresentation (a hi-res version can be seen at here.)

-Jeff Kaplan

Click image to see the Zigzag presentation

Team Zigzag: Ted Nelson, Art Medlar, Jeffrey Ventrella, Edward Betts. (Marlene Mallicoat and Andrew Pam)

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3 Responses to *Ted Nelson and Zigzag*

Markus Sandy *says:*

December 8, 2010 at 10:02 am

Interesting ideas here. Thanks for pointing this out.

BTW, the link to Xanadu website has one too many www. 's in it 🙂
Should be http://www.xanadu.com

internetarchive *says:*

December 8, 2010 at 7:05 pm

Thanks for catching that. It's been corrected.

Stecki *says:*

December 17, 2010 at 4:42 am

Too bad that the sound is so poor 🙁

I really would like to see more from Ted Nelson...

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