Bona Fide, redesigning the search experience

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Abstract of the answer to the call for proposals

Today, more often the issue lies within the idea of metaphors, are they always helpful? At what point can they limit our imagination and language? Currently, the ways in which we converse about, visualize, access and interact with digital content mostly mimic our relationship and processes with paper. When creating and working with digital content we use terms and concepts such as footnotes, endnotes, table of contents, pull quotes, lists, pages, and so on. For instance, a search engine enables us to search through large sets of content and yet the essence of our imagination when creating and using this capability is largely shaped based on what we know from analog systems. When we search for a term, topic, or ask a question what we get back is a list of contents that match our input as if we are being handed a pile of documents which then we have to read and analyze individually to understand the landscape better. I would like to argue that we can reshape our imagination and further realize our capabilities.

Bona Fide, a project at the concept stage, aims to rethink the meaning and experience of current search engines by looking at ways through which new dimensions can be added to content, where the focus is on relationships among contents rather than only focusing on each content as if they are completely independent from each other. Current search engines work well when we have the language to form a question, but do not empower us to expand our language and broaden our knowledge beyond our disciplines to guide us ask new questions. We are witnessing and experiencing more conversations and collaborations that are the result of increased overlaps and interdependencies among disciplines, so why can't the very tools we use to create and share knowledge reflect our changing processes better?

Bona Fide utilizes ideas from Gordon Pask's Learning Theory and knowledge representations known as Entailment Mesh, and Nicholas Negroponte's Architecture Machine.
With Bona Fide, I propose to open a conversation about the values and importance of this approach for creating knowledge in DH and any other discipline, and learn from the audience about their ideas and thoughts on this project.

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