The background of the slide is a blurred photograph of a library. It shows rows of bookshelves filled with books, receding into the distance. The lighting is soft, and the focus is shallow, making the text in the foreground stand out.

We are all experts now: The academic library and “information users”

Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians

30 May 2018

Tami Oliphant, University of Alberta

OUTLINE

Otlet and Heidegger—a brief biography

Otlet's vision

Heidegger's arguments

- CONSEQUENCES:

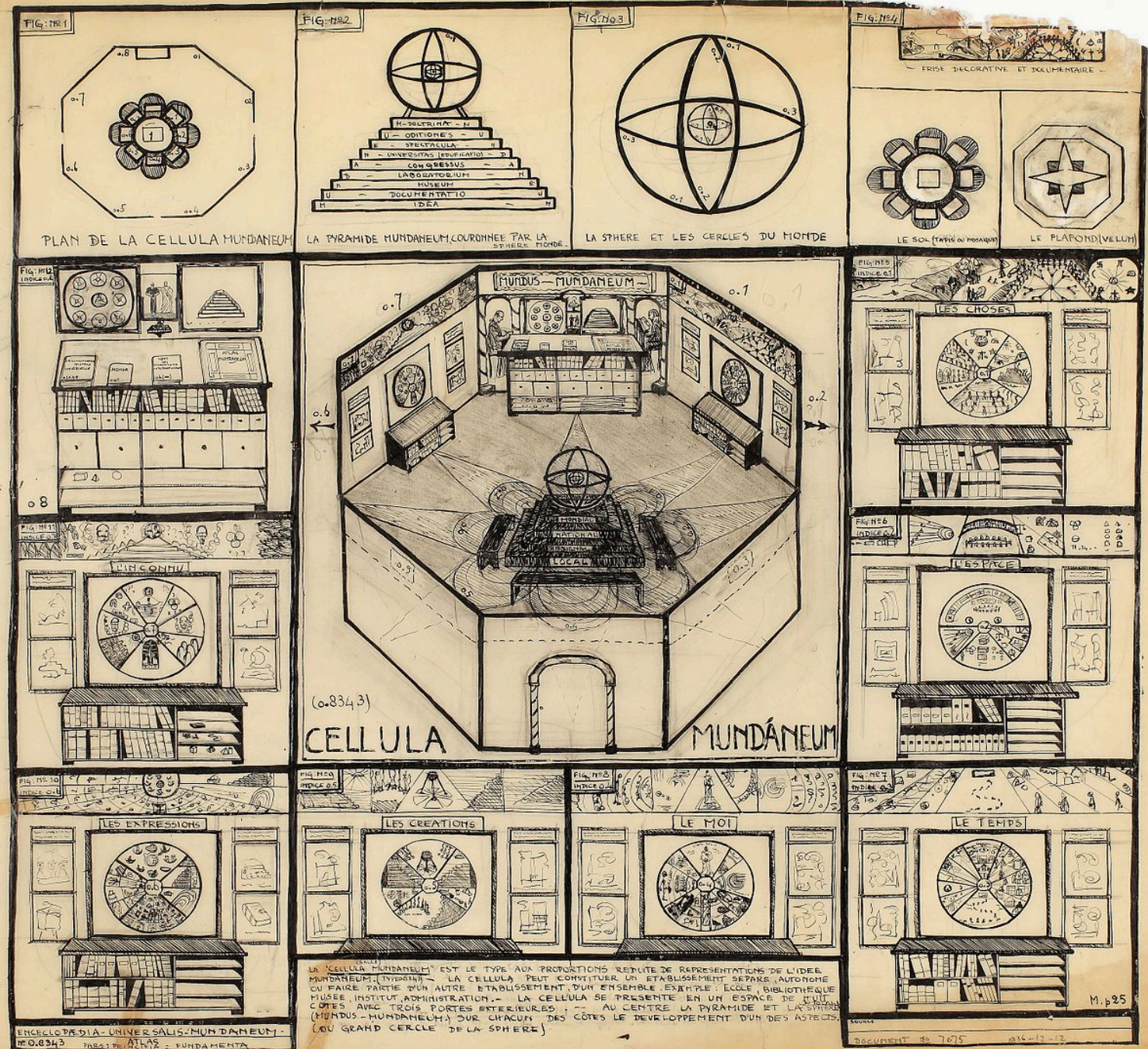
- Anti-expert
- Disciplinary knowledge
- Automation
- Libraries and librarianship

Paul Otlet



“He is a very old man with whom you can’t talk about politics. He has peculiar fantasies about **world peace**.” —Unnamed Nazi apparatchik quoted from *Cataloguing the World: Paul Otlet and the Birth of the Information Age* by Alex Wright

Mundaneum



Martin Heidegger



Levinas also condemned Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism, stating:
"One can forgive many Germans, but there are some Germans it is difficult to forgive. It is difficult to forgive Heidegger."

Some terminology:

- Sein=being
- Dasein=human existence
- Das Nichts=nothing
- Gerworfenheit=Thrownness
- Das Man=Theyself



OTLET and Texts

- **Books as friends**

“Once, one read; today one refers to, checks through, skims....Works are referred to, that is to say, one turns to them to ask for a reply to very precise, specialized questions... thus arises the necessity of having available great quantities of works, as many as possible” —Paul Otlet

The background of the slide is a blurred photograph of a library. It shows rows of bookshelves filled with books, and several pendant lights hanging from the ceiling, creating a warm and scholarly atmosphere.

OTLET and Libraries

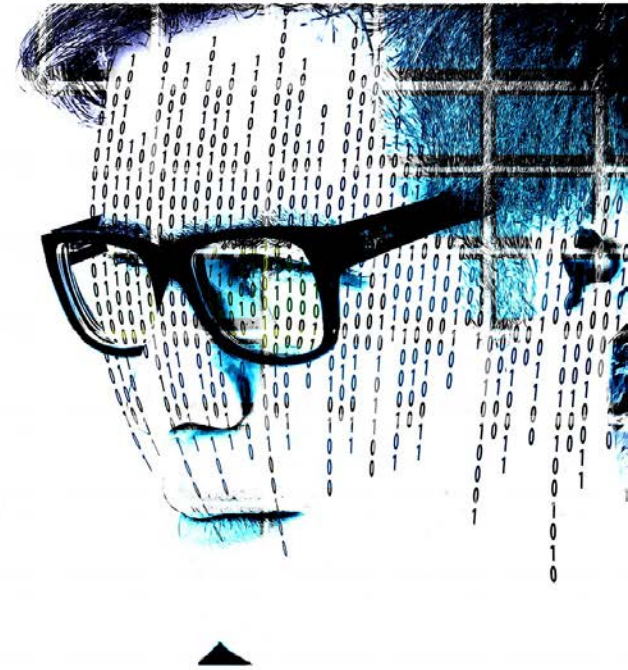
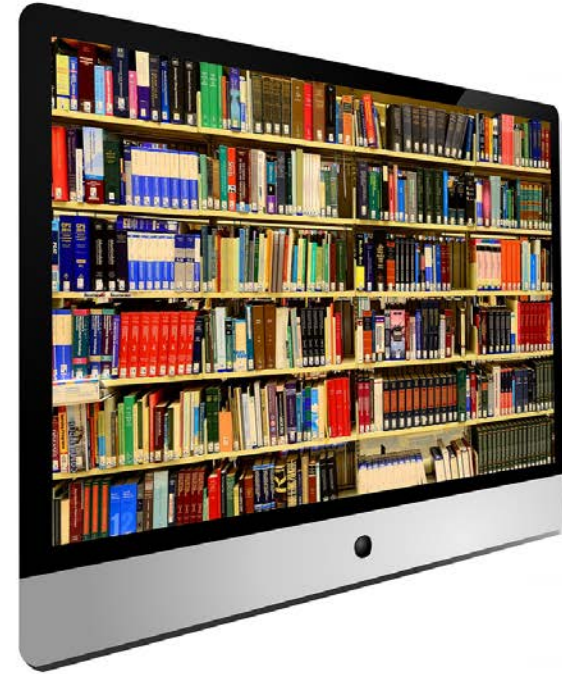
**“books as documents and libraries as
containers for documents”**

Heidegger and Texts

People and texts are bound to each other in an intimate relationship with the possibility of being understood.



Heidegger, Texts, and Technology



Heidegger and Libraries

Heidegger criticizes modern academic libraries as organizational forms within the instrumentalization of knowledge in modern academic and research systems.—Ronald Day, *Indexing it All*.

Heidegger and Libraries—The Scholar

In the modern age, [t]he scholar disappears. He is succeeded by the research man who is engaged in research projects. These, rather than the cultivating of erudition, lend to his work its atmosphere of incisiveness. The research man no longer needs a library at home. Moreover, he is constantly on the move. He negotiates at meetings and collects information at congresses. He contracts for commissions with book publishers. The latter now determine along with him which books must be written.—

Heidegger *The Age of the World Picture*

Sociotechnical Issues Arising from Otlet's Vision

Algorithmic authority (Sundin et al., 2017)

“So many **players and interests** see **online information** as a **uniquely powerful shaper** of individual action and public opinion in ways that serve their economic or political interests....These very diverse players would likely oppose (or try to subvert) technological or policy interventions or other attempts to insure the quality, and especially the disinterestedness, of information.”-- **Leah Lievrouw**, University of California



Sociotechnical Issues Arising from Otlet's Vision

Fisher, M., Goddu, M. K., & F. C. Keil. 2015. "Searching for explanations: How the Internet inflates estimates of internal knowledge" *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 144(3), 674-687.

Found that:

- People who used the Internet to answer a series of questions later vastly overestimated their ability to answer new questions correctly.
- People are more confident that they knew the answers when they had access to search.
- Transactive memory
- Emotional investments can give the illusion of insight



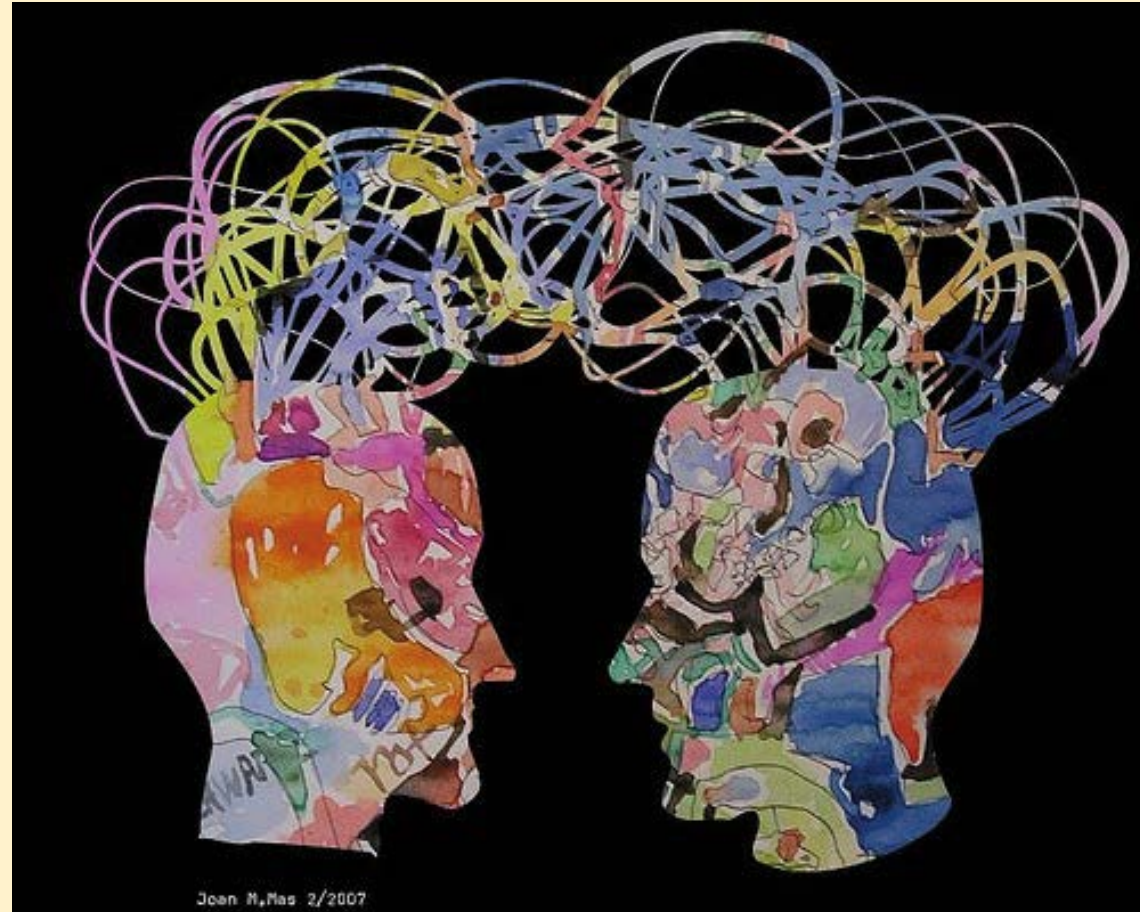
Heidegger

**Transformation of people's
experiences into “information.”**

Consequences of Shift

- Knowledge production
- Authority, science, and public discourse
- Academic library and post-secondary education

Knowledge Production



Authority, Science, and Public Discourse

A stylized brain graphic is centered on the slide. The brain is split vertically. The left hemisphere is filled with a green and blue pattern and contains icons of a DNA helix, a microscope, and a chemical structure. The right hemisphere is outlined in grey and contains icons of a chemical structure, a DNA helix, and a microscope. The text "In-Group" and "Out-Group Bias" is overlaid on the brain.

**In-Group
Out-Group Bias**

Academic Libraries and Post-secondary Education

- A university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library—Shelby Foote
- “No one ever graduated *from* a library, but no one ever graduated *without* one.” -Anonymous



Heidegger

**“Tell me how you read and I will tell you
who you are.”**