WEEK 13 ASSIGNMENT

Write a 1-2 page structured paper in response to your readings. The paper must focus on a single question; you may choose from the list below, but you are encouraged to formulate your own question. Your paper must follow the format explained in the Homework section of the site.

Tentative questions for your reading response:

1. How did the concept of hypertext evolve from the systems implemented on individual workstations to the WWW? Which of van Dam's areas of concern are still burning issues today?

2. In your opinion, is non-lineal thinking valuable in your field? Has instruction in your classes at MIT been largely lineal or non-lineal? Has the use of computer technology in the classroom strengthened the lineal or the non-lineal patterns of thought? Compare Intermedia with other forms of computer-based organization of educational material. What would be the most effective way to use computer technology in the classroom?

3. Do any of Raskin's criticisms of the Hypertext concept apply to the Intermedia system? To the WWW? Do you agree with Raskin that a designer must start with "a particular and finely tuned human interface, and only then [search] for technology to implement it" (p. 330)? Do you agree with his advocacy of linear structures?

4. How does the use of on-line databanks transform the humanities? What are its benefits and its limitations? Are hypertext systems better suited for engineering cultures (Crane in Ruhleder, pp. 41-42) or for the humanities?

5. Compare the Perseus digital library to a conventional library. What are the similarities and the differences between the two? How to make digital libraries more usable? Will conventional libraries survive?