Space, time and memory: tales from a long road

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Abstract

All roads lead to Rome: the Milliarium Aureum in the Forum marked the point from which distances were measured along the long roads that led in all directions. However, this is not simply a statement about one end point, it says *to*, not *from*. Roads are spatial, but journeys are temporal, with a beginning and an end. Furthermore, in Imperial times and for a millennium after, Rome was the centre of power temporal and spiritual; the 'to' makes clear that one's eyes should be cast towards its heart. Our conceptions of space and time are intimately interwoven with the social fabric of human life.

In 1996, at the AVI'96 conference in Gubbio, I gave my first keynote, which considered how sight, sound and smell create different cuts through space and time and call on memory in different ways to fill the void in current sensation. Twenty years on, at Talis, I studied the changing nature of physical text in a digital world. The written word takes a snaking line across the space of the page and through the volume of a book, preserving, prompting and promulgating memory.

During the Dark Ages, the laborious writing of Celtic monks on the Atlantic fringe was crucial to the continuity of knowledge. In 2013 I took my own winding route round the edges of Wales exploring viscerally the relation between space, time and memory. This talk will link lessons from that one thousand mile path and thirty years' study of time in user interaction.