

# OCLC Distinguished Seminar Series

Thursday, November 19, 2009

8:30-9:00 a.m.

Coffee & Pastry Reception

9:00-10:30 a.m.

Presentation and Discussion

OCLC Online Computer  
Library Center, Inc.  
Kilgour Building—Auditorium  
6565 Kilgour Place  
Dublin, OH 43017-3395

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## Memento: Time Travel for the Web

Herbert Van de Sompel

Research Library Prototyping Team Leader, Los Alamos National Laboratory

Co-authored by Michael Nelson, Old Dominion University

Have you ever felt frustrated by your inability to get to old versions of Web pages? Did you bookmark a page last year, and revisited it recently only to find that the current content isn't even remotely related to what caught your interest back then?

Remnants of the past Web are available, and there are many efforts ongoing to archive even more Web content. It's just that the past Web is not as readily accessible as today's. For example, if you want to see an archived version of <http://cnn.com>, you can go to the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine and search for it there. Or if you want to see an old version of the Wikipedia page about—say—clocks, you can go to the current page and from there follow a link to one of the many prior versions. And, if you are interested in stories that featured on the BBC news site on your last year's birthday, you can explore the archive that Matthew Somerville set up in his spare time.

But doesn't doing so feel more like walking to a library, than using the Web the way you usually do? Wouldn't it be much easier if you could just connect to [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), [Wikipedia](http://wikipedia.org), or [news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk) indicating that you are interested in the pages of March 20 2008, not the current ones? If you could activate a time machine in your browser or bot? The Memento solution that we propose to achieve this is based on existing HTTP capabilities applied in a novel way to add the temporal dimension. The result is a framework in which archived resources can seamlessly be reached via the URI of their original: protocol-based time travel for the Web.

## Background Information

Herbert Van de Sompel graduated in Mathematics and Computer Science at Ghent University (Belgium), and in 2000 obtained a Ph.D. in Communication Science there. For many years, he headed Library Automation at Ghent University. After leaving Ghent in 2000, he was Visiting Professor in Computer Science at Cornell University, and Director of e-Strategy and Programmes at the British Library. Currently, he is the team leader of the Prototyping Team at the Research Library of the Los Alamos National Laboratory. The Team does research regarding various aspects of scholarly communication in the digital age, including information infrastructure, interoperability, digital preservation and indicators for the assessment of the quality of units of scholarly communication. Herbert has played a major role in creating the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH), the Open Archives Initiative Object Reuse & Exchange specifications (OAI-ORE), the OpenURL Framework for Context-Sensitive Services, the SFX linking server, the bX scholarly recommender service, and info URI. Currently, he is working with his team and on the Open Annotation and Memento projects.

## Related Information

The Memento Project  
<http://www.mementoweb.org>

Herbert Van de Sompel  
<http://public.lanl.gov/herbertv/home/>

A recording of this presentation will be made available online at <http://www.oclc.org/research/dss/>.

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