



Information and Secrecy : Vannevar Bush, Ultra, and the Other Memex

Colin Burke

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Written for the general reader, Burke's volume provides the first view of the relationships among America's librarians, cryptanalysts and educators as they created information science, computerized codebreaking, and the modern research university. Using hundreds of primary and secret documents and more than twenty illustrations to trace the careers of Vannevar Bush of MIT and the navy's codebreaking agency, OP-20-G, Burke shows how the lack of coherent American science and intelligence policies led to the tangled lives of two proto-computers that were the world's first electronic data-processing machines. The histories of Bush's Memex-like microfilm Rapid Selector for the American Documentalists and his Comparator for those who created the nation's Ultra Bombe and RAM machines began in the early 1930s and suffered through a generation of struggles with intransigent technologies, policy conflicts with the British over the control of signals-intelligence and the unwillingness of America to develop information and intelligence technologies until the Cold War turned to science and the library to fulfill defense needs.

Now, as the United States is on the verge of investing billions of dollars in information highways while reducing its intelligence capabilities, the tragedy of Bush's machines warns against information scientists putting technology ahead of logic and of the dangers of the nation returning to isolationism. Indexed and with extensive endnotes which serve the bibliographic function.

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