

It's the end of day two of the Big Ideas Fest, and I've been inspired more times than I can count. I'm struck by how the participants are driving the conversation, working on designing and prototyping new solutions to education challenges in their Action Collab sessions. I'm also still thinking about last night's keynote speech by Brewster Kahle, founder of the [Internet Archive](#). In addition to archiving the entire Internet, he's also working towards archiving the Library of Congress and the world of film, television, software, and audio recording.

Brewster described his goal in life as “universal access to all knowledge [so] that anyone, anywhere can access anything that's ever been published, including music, lectures, articles, books, software, and more.” He sees this as an achievable goal, both financially and technically, and that we also have the political will to live in an open society. A few highlights from Brewster on this:

- It costs only \$10-15K per year to hold all the words in the Library of Congress on an online server
- It costs \$1 to give a book such as “The Owl and the Pussycat and the Duck and the Kangaroo” away for free – and much more than that to loan the book through a traditional library system
- To take traditional paper-bound book and digitize it and put it online costs about \$30 per book
- At the University of Toronto, 1,000 books per day are being digitized and put online
- There would be a \$20 million one-time cost to digitize the universe's entire library of music

Putting it in terms of costs, I have to agree, this seems pretty do-able. But there are other issues. For example, as Brewster pointed out, digitization of media and library content requires that organizations and individuals will need to acquire new technical knowledge and incorporate technology into their behavior and practice.

In the end, I agree with Brewster that the digitization of the collective knowledge base “could be one of the greatest human achievements of all time.” I'm left pondering the opportunities that would open up if we lived in a world where all content was available to anyone, anytime, for free. What are your thoughts?

