



Endless Frontier: Vannevar Bush, Engineer of the American Century

Gregg Pascal Zachary

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In the 20th - the American - Century, no visionary stands taller than Vannevar Bush. As the inventor and public entrepreneur who launched the Manhattan Project, helped to create the military-industrial complex, conceived of a permanent system of government support for science and engineering and anticipated the personal computer and the Internet, Bush is our century's reincarnation of Ben Franklin. Beginning with his boyhood as a turn-of-the-century tinkerer in his father's basement in Massachusetts, Bush went on to study and teach electrical engineering at Tufts and MIT. An early academic entrepreneur, he cofounded Raytheon, a highly successful electronics company, in his spare time. At MIT, during the Depression, he built what were then the most powerful computers in the world. During World War II, he was Roosevelt's adviser and chief contact on all matters of military technology, including the atomic bomb. He launched the Manhattan Project and oversaw a collection of 6,000 civilian scientists who designed scores of new weapons. When an Allied victory seemed inevitable, his attention turned to the future. In July 1945 he published his legendary essay, "As We May Think, " widely cited as the inspiration for the personal computer and the World Wide Web. In his landmark "Endless Frontier" report, published only weeks later, he boldly equated national security with research strength, outlining a system of permanent federal funding for university research that endures to this day.

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