2014

Raul Valdes-Perez Profile

Recommended Citation

next steps? How do you envision the future of the company?

RVP: We will launch free applications, grow awareness of this technology, learn from these launches and from discussions like this one, identify the best commercial applications, and go for them.

ATG: Given your work with Vivisimo and your experience in Web search and discovery systems, we would be remiss if we didn't ask you how you see search and discovery evolving. What can we expect in the near term? How about in the long term?

RVP: I'll let companies in the space talk about what's next. I can talk about what's needed. Users approach information retrieval systems with a variety of questions they want answers to. They then need to fit their need to the narrow channel of expressing a search query and getting back a list of results, with some navigation extras, perhaps. To address their need, users then need to do lots of extra manual and intellectual work.

Here's an example: Users often want to know what are the emerging topics in an area, i.e., what are emerging (or submerging) trends. You can do a query, but then you have to figure out yourself what the implicit trends are. **Andre Lessa** and I worked on that at **Vivisimo**, supported by a **National Science Foundation** grant, "Embedding Trend Discovery Within Search Engines," and got very promising results. As a user, I'd like search engines to offer to solve a variety of common information retrieval and analysis needs, not just search.

---

against the grain
people profile

Raul Valdes-Perez

Chief Executive Officer, OnlyBoth LLC
P.O. Box 8120, Pittsburgh, PA 15217
OnlyBoth.com

BORN AND LIVED: Born in Havana, Cuba. Grew up in Chicago. Completed Ph.D at **Carnegie Mellon** and stayed in Pittsburgh.

EARLY LIFE: Attended elementary and high school in the Chicago area, then did a gap year in Madrid before college.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Got B.S.E. and M.S. in computer engineering at **University of Illinois at Chicago**. Then went abroad for two years seeking adventure. Returning to the U.S., worked at the **MIT AI** lab for two years in **Randy Davis's** group. Went to **Carnegie Mellon** to do a Ph.D in computer science, then stayed as a research faculty member. Finally, we started **Vivisimo**, which I served as CEO for nine years and chairman until **IBM** acquired us, 12 years after founding.

IN MY SPARE TIME: Family, friends, travel.

FAVORITE BOOKS: I often cite *Cyrano de Bergerac* as a romantic tale of heroism and nobleness, and *Brave New World* as a dystopia of a diminished mankind.

PHILOSOPHY: "Advice is for Winners" which is the title of my book, subtitled "How to Get Advice for Better Decisions in Life and Work."

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: 15 years of monthly meetings with my Ph.D advisor and **Nobel Laureate Herbert A. Simon**, first as a student and later as a collaborator and colleague. One could ask him something about anything and walk away smarter.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: We want **OnlyBoth** to liberate the tremendous insights cloaked in structured data everywhere, yearning to breathe free and become known. 🌳

ATG: That sounds like a goal that we in libraries are trying to address. Instead of providing search results only, how do we provide possible meaningful solutions/pathways?

RVP Identify the common and valuable questions that users want answers to, and design algorithms and heuristics that will do it; it's a research endeavor. A further challenge is that you don't want yet another entry page that is separate from the search page. For our trend discovery work at **Vivisimo**, we added a separate Emerge button placed next to the Search button. A user typed a query and then pressed either Search or Emerge. Of course, you can't have too many such buttons, but you can have a few more. **IBM** now owns the prototype we developed. We'd love for them to bring it to market.

ATG: Everyone needs a little down time. What leisure activities do you enjoy? If we were to take a quick peek, what books would we see downloaded on to your tablet or smartphone?

RVP: I don't have a tablet or a smartphone, because I don't spend insufficient time in front of computer screens. For leisure, I prefer people contact involving friends, family, and travel, or books that help me see the world in ways that I'm not seeing now.

ATG: Raul, Thank you so much for a thoughtful interview! We really appreciate it.

RVP: You're very welcome. 🌳