

Information Architecture
for Web Development

2/14/02 Guest Lecture

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Introduction to Information Architecture For Web Development

Who is this guy?

- Scott
 - 6 years of multimedia/Web experience
 - B.A. in Theatrical stage management
 - Educational multimedia (UCSC)
 - Imagesmith—Executive management, project management & IA
 - Project Management certificate (UCSC)
 - Library Science graduate student
 - Consultant & Contractor

IA Definition — Quotes

“Architecture: The art or science of building [...] a unifying or coherent form or structure.”

—Webster’s Dictionary

“Information is data endowed with relevance and purpose.”

—Peter Drucker, Economist

“[An IA is] 1) the individual who organizes the patterns inherent in data, making the complex clear; 2) a person who creates the structure or map of information which allows others to find their personal paths to knowledge.”

—Richard Saul Wurman, Information Designer
Information Architects

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IA Definition — Quotes

"User experience is usefulness (*would* I use it?) plus usability (*could* I use it?)?"

—Terry Swack, Razorfish
ACIA Conference

"Fundamentally, IA is about creating navigational and organizational structures that put users in touch with the information they need, when they want it."

—Alison Head, Usability Consultant
Interview

"I find it hard to shake my sense that information architecture currently represents a collective process more accurately than it describes what any individual does."

—Andrew Dillon, Informatics Prof.
ASIS IA Column

At its core, Information Architecture is a human activity.

—Mike Barnes, Human Ecologist/IA

Information interactions are everywhere

- ATMs, car radios, multimedia & communications devices
- Using signs and visual queues—road signs while driving, product organization in stores, filing systems

Therefore, interaction frustrations are everywhere

- Trying to locate a street while driving—when road signs are missing!
- Trying to locate a unique ingredient in a supermarket
- Trying to associate price labels with products on crowded store shelves or clothing racks. (Could this be intentional?)

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IA History — Disciplines

Library & Information Science

- Information Organization
- Information Seeking & Retrieval
- Mental Models
- Analytic & Browsing Search Strategies

Human-Computer Interaction

- Fitt's Law

Anthropology

- Ethnographic Studies
- Cultural Expectations
- Social & Social Ecology

Usability Engineering

- Software Development
- Nielsen's work

Cognitive Psychology

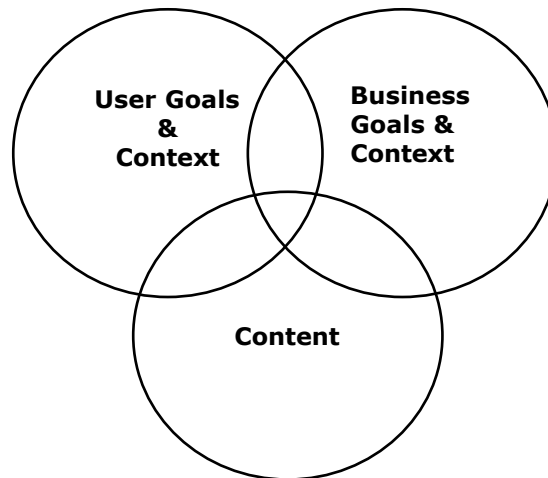
- Learning Theory
- Short- & Long-Term Memory and Learning
- Decision Making
- 7 ± 2 — phone #s and social security #s

Information Design

- Richard Saul Wurman (*Information Architects*)
- Edward Tufte (*Envisioning Information, Visual Explanations*)
- Desktop Publishing (power to the people)

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IA Trinity — Argus & Associates (from www.argus-acia.com)



IA Job Titles

- Information/Interaction Designer
- Interface Designer
- Information Scientist
- Usability Engineer
- User Experience Designer (UX)
- User Interaction/Interface Designer (UI)
- Customer Experience Designer
- Product Manager
- Product Designer
- Information Ecologist
- Market Researcher (and Marketing!)
- Content Manager
- Project Manager

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Site Mapping — The Basics

Why:

- To see what we're building, its flow, its high-level complexity
- Helps with scoping—identifying all the pieces
- Identify groupings, organize them, find relationships

Who:

- Information Architect

Sponsor Considerations:

- Some people can't relate to maps ...

Page Wire Framing — The Basics

Why:

- The page-by-page details
- The devil comes out
- Content needs—e.g. instructional
- User Testing

Who:

- Information Architect

Sponsor Considerations:

- No design may=poor quality in their eyes
 - *Walk though these with your sponsor!*

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Site Prototyping — The Basics

Why:

- Think wire frames for each page ... linked together
- User Testing

Who:

- Information Architect

Sponsor Considerations:

- HTML prototype can provide interactive experience
- Quality issue

Discount User Testing — The Basics

Why:

- This is the low-budget version of user testing, so you can test multiple times without a heavy financial burden
- To find the devil, through 'innocent' usage
- To put a site/application through real-world use

Who:

- Information Architect, User Testing Analyst, Receptionist
- Testers, Facilitator and Note Taker

Sponsor Considerations:

- Leverage quotes & results to make *proactive* changes
- Sometimes you're not doing it for them
- The most powerful tool in the IA tool belt
 - Watch out for leveraging users wrongly

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Discount User Testing

Identify your Audience:

- How broad will your users be? i.e. their experience/exposure?
- Who can be appropriately tested?
- *These groups should have been identified in your personas and should be known for any business endeavor*

Getting your users:

- Friends & Family
- Targeted users—with domain expertise
- Using a marketing firm
- Screening questionnaire (“Do you use a PC?”)
- Company privacy policies

Discount User Testing

Valuing their time:

- Keep the testing to 45 minutes – 1 hour
(this depends ... on complexity of your site/app)
- Always thank them for their time!

Paying your users:

- Stipend (\$50-100—depends on their expertise)
- Joanie loves chochkies

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Discount User Testing

Defining the test:

- Defining what you want to test
 - Transitions
 - User comfort level (privacy, security, time commitment*)
 - Task-based—or not
- Scenarios
 - “You are a customer wanting to return a product you just bought ...”
 - Guidance for non-domain specific users

Analyst: Interactive v. Observational

User: Focused v. Organic

Discount User Testing

Preparation:

- Paper Prototype—‘Wizard of Oz’ testing
 - Ability to describe missing pages
- HTML Prototype
 - Make sure you delete browser history
 - Blank screen when you first meet with user

Video Taping?

- Prepare Note Taker—make sure they’re unobtrusive & type quietly
(fully charged laptop ... plugged in)
- It’s about the *comfort* of your users
- It’s good to run a couple test tests ...
 - Try out Pacing, Timing
 - Getting to the info you’re really after (the good stuff—info you want)

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Discount User Testing

Beginning the test:

- Users sign in with Receptionist, fill out survey
- Be welcoming—It's about comfort!
- NDA
- Good to have a script for introduction—for consistency
 - Introduction to the project, their value to it
 - We're not testing you—we're testing the site/app
 - Provide a Scenario or Task—or not
- Please keep on telling us what you're thinking

Discount User Testing

Running the test:

- Initial impressions of the site/app
 - What do you think this site does?
 - What grabs your attention first?
- Ask questions throughout
- You may need to elaborate on language or terms used
- Answer questions from the user when they get stuck
 - but don't drive them
- If multiple scenarios/tasks, make sure to watch the clock
- May use some of your time for more focused questions
 - What do you think is behind this link?
 - Do you feel confident in the level of privacy or security of this site/app?

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Discount User Testing

After each test:

- Discuss with your Note Taker
- Brainstorm some solutions
- Identify roadblocks in actual testing—ways to avoid lengthy testing glitches

Receptionist:

- Exit survey for each user
- Payment to user

Discount User Testing

After the test:

- Discuss with your Note Taker
- Brainstorm appropriate solutions
- Consider influential quotes from users
- Report depth depends on your audience
 - Do you have to show this to your project sponsor?
 - Always present to all team members
 - Executive summary format can be good

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Recommended Books

- *Art of Human-Computer Interface Design, The*
Brenda Laurel. Addison-Wesley. 1990.
- *Designing Web Usability: The Practice of Simplicity*
Jakob Nielsen. New Riders Publishing. 2000.
- *Don't Make Me Think!*
Steve Krug. New Riders Publishing. 2000.
- *Envisioning Information*
Edward Tufte. Graphics Press. 1990.
- *Information Architecture*
Lou Rosenfeld and Peter Morville. O'Reilly & Associates. 1998.
- *Information Design*
Robert Jacobson, Ed. MIT Press. 1999.
- *Information Seeking in Electronic Environments*
Gary Marchionini. Cambridge University Press. 1995.
- *The Inmates are Running the Asylum*
Alan Cooper. Macmillan. 1999.

Recommended Books Cont'd

- *Secrets of Successful Web Sites*
David Siegel. Hayden Books. 1997.
- *Visual Explanations*
Edward Tufte. Graphics Press. 1997.
- *Web Navigation: Designing the User Experience*
Jennifer Fleming. O'Reilly & Associates. 1998.
- *Webworks: Navigation*
Ken Coupland, Ed. Rockport Press. 2000.