
**Information
Architecture
for the Web**

Module 3: **Structure
Content**



Info.Design
1725 Q Street NW, #201
Washington, DC
20009-2498

www.infodotdesign.com

3

Module 3: Structure Content

The motivation behind all communication is to transfer information from one mind into another who will receive it as new information.

Richard Saul Wurman, *Information Anxiety 2*, 2000

Objectives:

- 3.1** → **Gather in-depth information**
- 3.2** → **Evaluate content**
- 3.3** → **Chunk content**
- 3.4** → **Know your content (and context)**
- 3.5** → **Organize content**

Introduction

To make the choices required to structure information with the user in mind, you must also know this information, its users, and its context inside and out. We refer to this process of constructing information as GECKO.

As developers of Web products, we are responsible for gathering, evaluating, chunking, and organizing information. To make the choices required to structure information with the user in mind, we must also know this information, its users, and its context inside and out. We refer to this process of constructing information as GECKO.

In this module, you'll have an opportunity to explore each of the phases in the GECKO process. You'll explore the different ways to gather information, the questions you'll ask as you evaluate each piece of content, the challenges you'll face as you chunk information into groupings, and what it means to know your information deeply so you can organize it so people can find what they want and use it effectively.

3.1

Gather in-depth information

The conversation between the customer and interviewer about the customer’s work (rather than about the system design) creates a shared understanding and commitment between groups.

Hugh Beyer and Karen Holtzblatt, *Contextual Design: Designing Customer-Centered Systems*, 1998



Group Discussion

Discussion: Gathering content

Discuss how we can gather the content to include on a website.

How do we get information out of our heads?

How do we get information out of our users’ heads?

How do we get information out of the work environment?

Getting information out of our heads

Often when we construct websites, we base the structure of the information on what we know. Sometimes we might meet with others in a BOFSATT session (bunch of folks sitting around the table talking). We might ask, “What do we want to put on the site?” rather than focusing on what people want to do on a site. Certainly we have to rely on our own experience and knowledge, and as information architects we may be skilled at breaking information into groupings. We are challenged, however, to rely not only on what we know, but to get information out of users’ heads and the work environment as well.

If you are responsible for writing Web content, you may find that you struggle to get words out of your head. Respect the complexity of your task. Your first goal as a writer is to understand the content. Only after you understand the inherent structures and relationships can you craft understandable content.

Use your gathering phase to ask yourself questions about the content. Remember that when you structure information with the user in mind, you must emphasize clarity.

Assess the information you have in your head. Is it clear to you? Is it clear to others?

Getting information out of our users' heads

As a developer of communication products, you are often required to interact with information that is unfamiliar to you. You will need to depend on others to provide you with the findings, trends, facts, stories, and/or images that you need to help the user discover something new.

Follow these four steps to gather information:

- **Decide the type of information you want to get**
- **Listen deeply**
- **Create a relationship to users**
- **Select strategies to get it out of users' heads**

Decide the type of information you want to get

As you begin to gather information from others, you will have the opportunity to learn about the work they do on the job and how it relates to the overall work environment. Because there are so many questions you might ask, it's helpful to decide what type of information you want to gather. Specifically, you must decide if you want to find out:

- How information flows across the organization in order to relate your work to specific measures of success
- What everybody in the organization does in order to see overall relationships for the information architecture of a website
- How individuals do their work
- The order in which people perform tasks
- Detailed information about subtasks and decision points

Listen deeply

By understanding the questions that users ask and building sites to address these questions, we can create effective communication products.



Tips

Things to do:

- ✓ Listen carefully to many people. Gather information from more than one component, person, or unit of the organization.
- ✓ Remember that complaints, issues, and problems are not the whole story.
- ✓ Address all identified problems. Do not trivialize or dismiss a problem as being minor.
- ✓ Ask what has already been done before “solving” or addressing problems.
- ✓ Track metaphors, silences, verbs, and expressions of emotion.¹



Question

What is the difference between listening as the producer or director of a site and listening as a user of a site?

Create a relationship to users

To fully address user needs, you must get into their heads, find out what they know, and establish a strong connection to them.



Tips

Things to do:

- ✓ Build trust.
- ✓ Get to know the whole organization.
- ✓ Learn what other types of problems people within the organization have had.
- ✓ Learn who constitutes the informal authority structure, as well as the formal authority structure (and work with both).

¹ Adapted from Stern, Howard F., *Listening Deeply: An Approach to Understanding and Consulting in Organizational Culture*, Westview Press, Inc., 1994.

- ✓ Help the organization understand the complexity, breadth, and depth of its own culture.
- ✓ Help the group tolerate not knowing for a while by showing how you can tolerate uncertainty and anxiety.
- ✓ Avoid over-identifying with the urgency the organization is projecting onto you to solve the problem.²



Question

How do these listening techniques apply to your organization?

Select strategies to get it out of users' heads

As your final step in getting information out of users' heads, you have the opportunity to watch them work and get them to talk out loud as they make decisions. Asking specific questions, you will learn more about audiences, their purposes, and their contexts.

Sometimes we downplay the importance of actually talking to users. Managers might tell us, "Oh, we know our users." Or we might be challenged with time constraints. When opportunities do arise to gather feedback from others, we often fall back on focus groups, rather than sitting down with users one-on-one or within the context of their work environments.

In selecting strategies for gathering information, consider research on how people convey details about their jobs:

- Users often do not know how to articulate what they do—especially if they are very familiar with their work
- Users' testimonies are often incomplete—they may emphasize only activities that they find exciting or difficult
- Users' testimonies are often inaccurate—they may report only what they believe to be true, not what is true³

² Adapted from Stern, Howard F., *Listening Deeply: An Approach to Understanding and Consulting in Organizational Culture*, Westview Press, Inc., 1994.

³ Hackos, JoAnn T. and Janice C. Redish. *User and Task Analysis for Interface Design*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998.

So how can you best select a strategy to get information out of your users' heads? You certainly need to ask questions about audience, purpose, and context. Your specific strategy will depend on the question you want to answer. Refer to the following synthesis of strategies identified by JoAnn Hackos and Janice Redish in their book, *User and Task Analysis for Interface Design*.

If you want want to gather information about organizations		
<p>To find out</p> <p>↓</p> <p>How information flows across the organization (to relate your work to specific measures success)</p>	<p>Then do this</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Build a flowchart of steps (workflow analysis).</p>	<p>Specifically</p> <p>↓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note when and how people communicate with each other. • Pay attention to when and how people call or email each other for information/advice/approvals. • Watch for bottlenecks—where do documents stop and rest? • Note differences between official and unofficial processes.
<p>What everybody in the organization does (to see overall relationships for the information architecture of a website)</p>	<p>Build a task list (task inventory).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name the tasks with the users' words. • Remember that an inventory of tasks does not tell you HOW users will accomplish the tasks.

If you want want to gather information about people		
<p>To find out</p> <p>↓</p> <p>How individuals do their work</p>	<p>Then do this</p> <p>↓</p> <p>List goals and tasks as you observe each worker (job analysis).</p>	<p>Specifically</p> <p>↓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust what you observe more than what people tell you about their tasks. • Get users to talk aloud—to describe what is going on in their heads as they perform tasks. • Get users to talk right after the task when you can't talk during the task. • Pay attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of tasks • Frequency • Criticality • Time constraints • Difficulty • Gather “cheat sheets,” job aids, reference charts, forms, weekly reports, and any other material that helps the specific person accomplish goals and tasks.
<p>The order in which people perform tasks</p>	<p>Build a task sequence list (sequence analysis).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay close attention to sequence variations among people performing the same task. • Ask “Is this flexibility something I want to incorporate into my information product?” • Note that just because users follow a specific sequence doesn't mean it will be the best one for your new information product. • Recall that sometimes a routine, the current version of a product, or management shaped the sequence. • Beware of managers telling you that everyone does something the same way.
<p>Detailed information about subtasks and decision points</p>	<p>Complete a task analysis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record all the subtasks and decisions a user goes through to complete a task. • Note what kinds of information the user needs throughout the procedure to make decisions and act.

Definition: Task analysis

Task analysis is gathering in-depth information from users to understand goals, tasks, and actions. In the Web environment, you are working with users and collecting content to decide which tasks the website should support and which actions should be built into it to enable users to get jobs done.

Getting information out of colleagues' heads

One-on-one or one-on-two interviews will enable you to get performance-based information. During these sessions, collect information about how people are currently doing their jobs. Look for behaviors that constitute success on the jobs. Focus as much on what they do, as well as on how they want the new system to improve what they are doing.

Specifically, use the interviews to identify:

- Purposes and goals
- Job environment (context)
- Job performance measures and performance standards
- Tasks required to accomplish the job
- Knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the tasks
- Performance-based measures and standards for each task
- Tasks requiring training outside the system to achieve criteria for job/task performance
- Tasks that were accomplished in a similar way previously (enabling task comparison analysis)



Tips

How to gather in-depth information

Use the following guidelines for gathering in-depth information from users:

- ✓ Observe, listen, and talk to users as they work—meet with them one-on-one if possible.
 - Plan—understand the issues and objectives for the visits.
 - Choose a diverse group of users for information gathering and testing.
 - Treat users as partners.
- ✓ Ask questions about tasks they do on the job.
 - Talk about what users are doing or just did.
- ✓ Ask questions about how information flows.
 - Share your emerging understanding with users.
 - Verify your understanding.
- ✓ Assess findings and diagram processes.

Usability Methods: Think-Aloud Protocols

Joe Dumas, American Institutes for Research¹

Watching a test participant think aloud is probably the signature quality of a usability test. This talking is one of the factors that gives usability testing so much credibility as an evaluation tool.

What do we want participants to do when they think aloud in a usability test?

We must encourage participants to go beyond a play-by-play description. Participants must articulate their rationale, expectations, reactions, and more.

What are the three levels of “thinking aloud?”

- Level 1 verbalization: Just thinking (no explanations)

Participants are asked to talk aloud constantly to express their thoughts. The emphasis at this level is on thoughts, not explanations or rationale for any actions. Research shows that the way participants solve the problem and what they say out loud match each other when they are giving Level 1 verbalizations. The participants are assumed to be saying out loud what they have stored in their short-term memories.

- Level 2 verbalization: Same, but when manipulating non-verbal information

Similar to Level 1, but at this level, the problem requires the manipulation of non-verbal information, such as geometric

shapes. The participant must code the results of the problem’s solution into words to say them out loud. These verbalizations are assumed to mimic internal thought.

- Level 3 verbalization: Thinking plus explanations

This level of verbalization is qualitatively different from the other two levels. Participants are given supplemental instructions to “explain each step as thoroughly as you can” or “say not only what you are thinking, but why.” At Level 3 we are no longer getting a record of what participants read out of their short-term memories. Rather, we are getting the participants’ interpretations of the processes they are using, or the reasons why they have selected a strategy.

How do we get participants to do the right type of think-aloud for a usability test?

Give the participants explicit instructions asking for the types of information you want and demonstrate the technique to participants. Give participants an opportunity to practice Level 3 by thinking aloud before beginning the usability testing.

¹For more information, refer to *Design by People for People: Essays on Usability*, Russell J. Branaghan, Ed., Usability Professionals’ Association: Chicago, 2001.

Getting information out of the work environment

People create, use, and modify things in the course of doing their work. These things are considered artifacts or evidence of how users have manipulated and changed information to accomplish goals and tasks.

Your role as an architect of Web information is to FIND these artifacts and organize them so users can apply this information to getting their jobs done. Examples of artifacts include:

- Documents
- Sticky notes
- Job aids
- Tools
- Forms
- Third-party manuals



Book
Reference

To gather knowledge about people and their work environment, you can use techniques such as Contextual Inquiry, a field data-gathering technique to help arrive at a fuller understanding of the work environment. Resources such as Hugh Beyer and Karen Holtzblatt's book, *Contextual Design: A Customer-Centered Approach to Systems Design*, can support your understanding of these processes. The challenge is to observe the work while it happens and to let the conversation between customers and interviewers create a shared understanding and commitment.

Gathering information

1. Meet with users in a one-on-one environment, if possible.

2. Ask these questions about the work they do on the job:

- What are the primary responsibilities of your job?

(Repeat each responsibility using a verb as a way to better define it ... and see if the verb fits your user's thought process.)

For each responsibility, ask these questions:


- What type of information do you need to help you do your work?
- How often do you do each of these responsibilities?
- How critical is each responsibility to the rest of your work or the purpose of your job?
- How much time do you have to complete each responsibility?
- Do you need more time?
- How does the Web help you complete each responsibility?
- What would help you do your job better?
- What problems do you encounter when you step into each of these responsibilities?
- What solutions have been proposed in the past to help you complete this responsibility?
- Did they work? What happened?
- What other kinds of information would help you do your work better?

3. Ask these questions about *how* users work or transfer information on the job (workflow):

- Where's the information now? Is it in print? Is it electronic?
- How does work flow across the organization?
- How does the information help you meet your organization's goals?
- Are different people involved? Are their jobs different than yours? What do they do?
- When information moves through your organization, does it ever stop at a bottleneck (such as a person who always needs to sign off on the work)?
- Are there any official processes for how you get your jobs done?
- Are there any unofficial processes for how you get your jobs done?
- Which process works better? Why?
- Does everyone perform this process in the same way?
- If you were to explain this process, what would you say?
- Does everyone have to do things the same way? What if they don't?
- Is there other information that would help people accomplish goals more effectively?
- Do people need additional information to act?

4. Assess findings:

- Identify primary goals.
- Break primary goals down into tasks and actions.
- Represent the hierarchy in an outline or tree diagram and show structure to users.

3.2 

Evaluate content

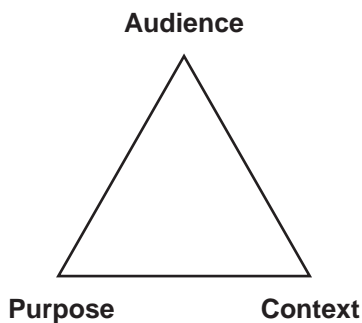
All information has structure. You need to see how the information is arranged into parts, and the relationships between the parts. Then you can see distinctions in the work that users must do. As a developer of any communication product, you always have two choices:

- Decide what to put in
- Decide what to leave out

What to put in and leave out

You can decide what to put in and leave out by:

- Understanding the audience/users
 - Who are they?
 - What do they want?
- Understanding their purpose
 - How does each artifact you are reviewing relate to what your audience needs to know or do?
- Understanding their context
 - Under what circumstance or in what conditions do the users perform?



Analyze and evaluate the information

Analyze and evaluate the information you gather. You will organize the information based on the results of your evaluation.

- How is this information useful to my audience?
 - Users always have a purpose.
 - Users always respond to a trigger word or image.
- How does this information support what my audience wants to know or do?
 - How do users see their tasks?
 - Are there any coherent wholes?
 - Does the information hang together?

Provide evidence. You must provide evidence to support what your users want to know. The results of the task analysis provide that evidence.

Evaluate content. Review the information to be sure all content responds to information the users of the site want to know or do. If it doesn't meet a specific need, it probably shouldn't be on the site.

Consider layering. Layering provides continuing depth of information for users who want it. You must decide on the level of importance—and therefore the layer—by asking:

- How much does the user want to know?

3.3

Chunk content

Finding, winnowing, sorting, organizing, and imprinting the information takes priority over creating it. After all, the Library of Congress wouldn't be of much value if all the books were piled randomly on the floor. The way information is presented and organized becomes as important as the content.

Richard Saul Wurman, *Information Anxiety 2*, 2001

What is chunking?

Chunking is the process of assembling information into similar topics. When we begin the act of chunking, we're reminded of the Sesame Street song, "One of these things is not like the others, one of these things doesn't belong."

The success of chunking depends, in part, on the relevance of the information chunked together. All information in one chunk must relate to one main point, based on the user's purpose.

Rationale for chunking

Research suggests that people can process and remember no more than seven plus or minus two pieces (7 ± 2) of information chunked together at one time. As the complexity of the information increases, the size of the chunk must decrease.

We can improve users' comprehension and access to information by chunking information into purposeful units. Irrelevant information causes extra cognitive work and slows users down while they figure out what the material is, what to do with it, and where it belongs.

Questions for chunking

As an architect of Web information you strive to guide your users. You want to attend to ways users perceive and interact with information. You establish relationships and structure by asking:

- What is similar or parallel?
- What are the relationships between the content chunks?
- What do users want to know or do?



Tips

The following are general guidelines for chunking information:

- ✓ Chunk information by content, function, purpose, and audience.
- ✓ Separate long documents into chunks of related information.
- ✓ Limit the size of each chunk to a manageable unit of information.
- ✓ Use headings and subheadings to convey the chunked relationships.

Ways to chunk information

Here are some general ways to chunk information:

- Facts
- Parts
- Principles
- Procedures
- Processes
- Reference information
- Conceptual information
- Definitions
- Background

Procedure for chunking

Use the following procedure to shape each chunk of information so users can see the text:

- Look at each piece of information. Ask yourself, “Why does the user want this information?” Does he or she want to share it, consider it, debate it, act on it?
- Determine how this chunk of information relates to the whole
- Assess how this chunk of information relates to other chunks

Now you are ready to organize your chunks of information.



Group
Exercise

Exercise: Chunking

Scenario

You have been hired to create a website for an information architecture consulting firm. The firm offers consulting and training services.

User goals

- Learn about information architecture
- Discover consulting services
- Explore training options

Think like a user

- Use sticky notes and write down three separate tasks for each of the goals users want to complete. In total, you should have nine sticky notes
- Start each task with a verb (refer to the verb list, Module Supplement 1B on page 31)

Think like a builder

- Use sticky notes and write down five things you would expect to find on this site (examples: search box, site map, contact information)

Work in teams

- Separate the verbs from the nouns
- Divide into two teams: one team gets only nouns, the other only verbs
- Chunk the sticky notes into like groupings
- Apply labels to your groupings
- Take out what you don't need

Build a better site

- Explore each team's work
- Discuss challenges and limitations
- Working as one group, merge the noun site with the verb site

3.4 

Know your content (and context)

Too often, as developers of Web products, we rush to meet deadlines—to slap content up on a website and worry about the details later. Too often, our users are unable to move through the content because they can't see the relationships and patterns.

Where does the problem lie? We believe it's essential to respect the “K” in GECKO—to “know” your content, your users, their needs, and the context. Certainly this knowledge supports you as you evaluate your content—trying to decide what to leave in and what to take out—but it supports you as well as you begin to organize information.

Know your context

To know your information, you have to understand the context in which your Web users will apply the information. For example, are you providing pre-buy information to aid your customers in making a buying decision? Are you structuring information to facilitate the placing of an order? Are you providing information following a sale to insure the customer can use the product successfully? Are you developing a relationship with the individual customer?

Know your labels

Essential to knowing your content is knowing the vocabularies and terms your audience uses to describe the same things. Words that seem like “no-brainers” to you may not make sense to your audience. Remember that everyone's experience differs.

Familiarity breeds confusion. Those suffering from the disease of familiarity are the experts in the world who, so bogged down by their own knowledge, regularly miss key points as they try to explain what they know.

**Richard Saul Wurman,
Information Anxiety 2, 2001**



Tips

Fight the “disease of familiarity”

The challenge for the information architect is to fight the disease of familiarity—and to think differently about information and the structure of information. Remember that all users do not have the same level of experience or knowledge. You must develop user-focused ways of presenting information to match users’ needs and goals.

Have you ever been to a website:

- Where you did not understand what a label meant?
- That was organized around departmental structures (rather than the inherent structure of the information)?

Then, you have witnessed the disease of familiarity.

Things to do:

- ✓ Watch out for subject matter experts who assume everyone has the same level of experience they do.
- ✓ Get to know the whole organization. As you gather content, you will encounter people who believe everyone thinks like they think. Do they? Do your users?
- ✓ Listen carefully to many people, especially those in different sub-units of the organization.
- ✓ Speak the users’ language with words, phrases, and concepts that are familiar to them.
- ✓ Test categories. Ask users if the labels make sense to them.
- ✓ Avoid BOFSATT—“bunch of folks sitting around the table talking”—for gathering information.



Workworld
Consideration

The disease of familiarity. A hospital in Pennsylvania launched a website that repeatedly used the term “oncology” to describe areas of content about cancer. But when patients, unfamiliar with the term oncology, went to the site seeking information on cancer, they couldn’t find what they were looking for. The people who structured the information and determined the category labels assumed everyone had the same knowledge level as they did. And, unfortunately, they hadn’t done any usability testing to identify the problem before launching the site.

Think like the user

As information architects, we are called upon to take complex information and convey it to a target audience as clearly as possible. However, organizations seldom meet user needs. Research by User Interface Engineering, Inc. (UIE) shows that people cannot find information they are seeking on a website about 60 percent of the time.

Donald Norman, in his classic text, *The Psychology of Everyday Things*, explains how a designer’s framework may differ from a user focus. He says, “the design model is the conceptualization that the designer has in mind. The user’s model is what the user develops to explain the operation of the system. Ideally, the user’s model and the designer’s model are equivalent. However, the user and the designer communicate only through the system itself.”

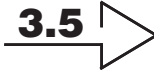
As information architects, we are called upon to think like user advocates. In fact, thinking like the user is the essence of information architecture.



Group Discussion

Discussion: Why can't people find information?

3.5



Organize content

When you build Web documents, you organize your content from the bottom up. What this means is that instead of starting with labels and then trying to smooch information to conform to them, you group related chunks of information and ask, “Are there similar topics that could fit into the category and label that users will see on the screen?”

Following a bottom-up approach

When you organize information from the bottom up, you are following a process similar to the technique known as affinity diagramming.¹ In this technique, you start with the observation data and watch the content chunks emerge. Follow these steps to organize content:

- Review your notes, highlighting interesting observations and content. You might want to write out lists for your information.
- Review your lists, notes, and observations with your team members.
- Provide each team member with a set of sticky notes or note cards and ask them to write down potential content on each sticky note. Team members can write as many notes as they choose.
- As team members write notes, they stick them on a whiteboard or large wall space. As team members post their notes, they may get new ideas and add new notes based on the notes that others have produced.
- With your team, organize the sticky notes into chunks or groupings. Anyone can move any note as many times as they wish.
- Create labels for the chunks as they occur during the process.
- Discuss with the team any issues noted on the sticky notes. Rearrange as necessary.

[Card techniques and sticky notes]...all have in common the goal of partitioning a large information space into manageable subsections that reflect the intuitive expectations and mental models of the user base.

**Michael D. Levi and
Frederick G. Conrad,
*Usability Testing of
World Wide Web Sites,*
1998**

¹Source: Hackos and Redish, *User and Task Analysis for Interface Design*, 1998. Hackos and Redish synthesize the work of Beabes and Flanders (1995), Holtzblatt and Beyer (1994).

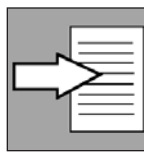
Identifying expectation-driven structure

When you organize information for the Web, it's helpful to think of your content as it relates to what users expect to read. You have the opportunity to use this expectation structure on almost any page and section. Refer to Module 6 for details on how you can present information so it predicts what is coming up, controls the order (and what the user is expecting), and obligates you to present information your users expect.

Keeping track of content

How can you keep track of all the information you get from your head and the heads of users? Use a content inventory list to:

- Organize noun information to show available content
- Organize content that flows from your verb information on a goals and information matrix
- Track information required to complete tasks



Module
Supplement

Refer to the Module Supplement 3A on page 88 for a sample Content Inventory List.

Using a database

If you have 300 or more pages of content, you probably want to map your content in a database. Immerse yourself in the content to gain familiarity with the information. Chunk your tasks into groups. Assign content a general category label (for example, “topic,” “tip,” “news,” “resource”).

With site survey tools (such as Microsoft Site Server), you can automate the process of identifying each of your current HTML pages. These sophisticated tools will give you the numbers of links to other pages and tell you how many pages internally link to you. They will also tell you the level of each page, the page title, the page author, the date it was created, and the date it was last modified.

Using database tools, you can add new fields to help you structure content. You might add fields for file type (HTML, PowerPoint, HTML, SHTML, ColdFusion, Java Applet, Microsoft Word). You can also add information on page status (adapt, migrate, delete, hold, or archive).

Use this structure when adding information on page status

Adapt: This content will need to be reorganized and the text will need restructuring.

Migrate: Nothing needs to be done with this content. It can be picked up whole and moved to a new location. It might require some light editing.

Delete: This content will not be moved (initially, perhaps) into the new site—based on established criteria.

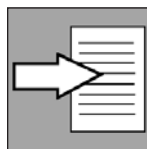
Hold: This content would need management approval to delete, or perhaps an explanation from the owner about its relevance or relationships. (Relate this to audience, purpose, and context.)

Archive: This content can be stored in a database. It might be dated, but you still want to give people access to the information (such as old news releases). Or the content might be large data files (for example, membership records or statistical records) you may want to access via an application such as ColdFusion.

Keeping track of site structure

If you are responsible for maintaining the content for an entire site, we recommend that you use a site structure table. The table allows you to list the primary navigational units for the site and specific content labels for each unit.

The site structure table allows you to see the relationships of all the content on your site. It gives you an opportunity, as well, to see a structure for managing how you collect your content.



Module
Supplement

Refer to Module Supplement 3B on page 89 for a sample Site Structure Table. Also, you can view a completed Site Structure Table online at <http://www.infodotdesign.com/class/ia>.



Workworld
Consideration

In the real world people develop ownership about the labels for programs and their topics. To overcome the barriers of people and politics, take your existing content, remove its current labels, and then begin to chunk it. Ask, “Which users want to use this information?” “What type of content is this?” “What is this content related to?” Match the content that is similar. You can complete this task by hand or by using a database.



Tips

Guidelines for using a database

- ✓ In your database, add new fields for file type and page status.
- ✓ Assign each page to one of the general labels.
- ✓ Run a “sort” in your database so you have smaller information to chunk.
- ✓ Go into each smaller chunk of information and ask, “What fits together?”
- ✓ Assign working labels to the smaller chunks of information.
- ✓ Compare the chunks to determine their granularity (Are some bigger or smaller?).
- ✓ Run another sort to break this chunk into a smaller group.

