


An Eight Minute Survey of Information Architecture

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Minute One:

We go crazy finding and using information


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Scenario: Visual Overload



- Your goal: **order food**
 - **Background:** \$5.00 in your pocket and you want to order lunch using the Sticks and Bowls menu.
 - What **problems** do you encounter?

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Minute Two:

We figure out why we go crazy finding and using information

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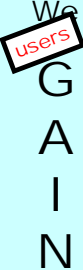
We face cognitive overload



- 1. Things on page were visually similar
 - We wanted text to be **graphical**
- 2. We couldn't do what we wanted to do
 - the directions weren't clear
 - we didn't know what to do
 - We wanted text to be **action-focused**
- 3. The categories didn't make sense
 - Rice Bowls I, Rice Bowls II...huh?
 - We look for relationships.
 - We want information to be **Interconnected**.
- 4. We wanted to find our way around
 - We wanted text to be **navigable**


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 Minute **Three**:
We discover our individual problem is bigger problem than we tend to think...

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We are bombarded with data.

We're flipped out




▶ **1.5 exabytes of data is generated worldwide. (a stack of floppy disks circling the moon and back 4 times)**

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Background

▶ **So.. We're grumpy.**



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Our "grumpiness" affects our work

61% of managers believe information overload is present in their own workplace

50% ignore info (when too much is present)

84% store it for future reference

Source: Reuters, Glad to the Screen 1997




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Our "annoyance" costs our members and our organization

An average worker "costs" 62 cents per minute.

Based on average salary of 50K plus benefits

30 minutes wasted = \$18.75 per day.



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Cost of being lost in information

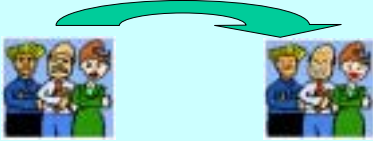
▶ **Imagine Directing Information to 1000 employees**

- 1000 employees lost for a half hour a day
- \$18.75 x 200 workdays = \$3750
- \$3750 x 1000

= \$3.75 million a year because of information structure

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We face an organizational challenge...



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We face an organizational challenge...



How can we enable people to do their jobs more efficiently?

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Our organization challenge has a structural solution.

► We can structure information so people can find it and use it (and appreciate the experience)



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Structural Solution = Information Architecture

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Structural Solution = Information Architecture

But where did Information Architects Come From?

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Minute Four:
We explore where information architects came from...

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IA Timeline

1976 Richard Saul Wurman
Coined the label **Information Architect**
Looked at underlying structures in information...

1980s Business Embraces the World Wide Web

1990s 1996 Rosenfeld and Morville popularized the label in the technical press, espousing early on what people asked, "What the heck do we do with this content?"

2002 New York such as Christine Wroble's "Blueprints for the Web" focus on role of I.A. in developing the information structure (and layout)

Jobs:
Information Architect
1999: Approx. 50
2000: Approx. 150
2001: Approx. 200
Last Month: 671

"You only understand something new relative to something you already understand."
Wurman's First Law of Information Organization

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Minute Five:

We explore, "what is it that information architect's DO"

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Information Architects **structure information** so people can find it, use it, and appreciate the experience.

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Information Architects **follow systematic processes** for structuring information with the user in mind.

Analysis: Who are you building the "communication product" for? What will your audiences be doing with this product?

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Information Architects **find relationships** in disconnected information...

"Information is easier to remember when it is in an orderly state, rich in pattern and structure, and highly interconnected."
Disordered information that lacks structure is easy to forget!
—Jeremy Campbell
Grammatical Man

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Information Architects explore the **structure of content**

G gather
E evaluate
C chunk
K know
O organize

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Information Architects help users GAIN

Graphical

- ▶ Help others think CRAP
 - Contrast
 - Repetition
 - Alignment
 - Proximity

Interconnected

- ▶ Use LATCH as a framework for identifying different ways to structure information
 - Location
 - Alphabet
 - Time
 - Category
 - Hierarchy


Action-focused

- ▶ Explain to others how online information is performance-focused
 - Focus on performance
 - Diminish emphasis on preference

Navigable


- ▶ Use 4Rs as a framework for ensuring information is ...
 - Recognizable
 - Routed
 - Responsive
 - Rhetorical

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 Minute Six:
We learn why IA
(and usable structure)
matters

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Why IA Matters




- **User Reasons**
 - People get lost and frustrated
 - Potential clients, customers, members, supporters, leave site
 - People write you off

Usability methods can raise user satisfaction ratings for a system by 40%

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Why IA Matters




- ▶ **Positive experience = trust**

Research shows that 77% of users return to content and information sites because of ease of use. Positive experience correlates to increases in loyalty and trust.

(Source: Forrester Research, June 2001)

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Why IA Matters



- **Management Reasons**
 - Poorly architected sites are harder to maintain (changes seem arbitrary and haphazard)
 - Sites without solid, expandable, architecture require new decisions, approvals, and political battles

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Why IA Matters




- **Information Architecture Helps Managers**

Information Architecture is measurable: Research shows for every dollar spent implementing usability techniques, the organization will realize a benefit between \$10 and \$100

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Why IA Matters



- The benefits of usable technology include reduced training costs, limited user risk, and enhanced performance.

Improving the information used by workers raises their measured performance substantially—never less than a 20% improvement, sometimes as high as 600%.
Thomas Gilbert, Engineering Human Performance

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Minute Seven

We identify a foundation (and principles) to this field

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Rhetorical Foundation

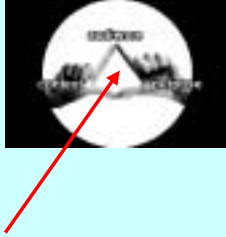
A user-focused process gives us a framework for deciding what to leave in and take out.



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Foundation


A user-focused process gives us a framework for deciding what to leave in and take out.



Content: what we leave in

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Foundation: Ask Key Questions



- Who's the audience?
- What TASKS do they want to do?
- How do we measure success?

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8 Principles of IA

Performance	how do we measure effectiveness?
Process	how do we keep the user in mind?
Product	what forms would support our users?
Presentation	what strategies do we use to support our users?
People	who will provide content and expertise?
Politics	are there barriers to effectiveness?
Perspective	are you serving as a user advocate?
Possibility	can you respect users and make the complex clear?


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Minute Eight:
We see where we might go next...

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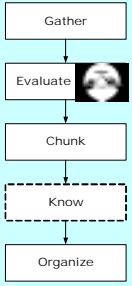
Tool for Remembering How Users Think



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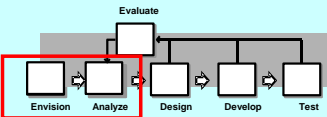
Tool (framework) for sorting content

- GATHER:** from our heads, from others heads, from the work environment
- EVALUATE:** How does content support audience purpose and context?
- CHUNK:** What are groupings and structures are they consistent, why do they help the user
- KNOW:** Am I thinking like the user How do I manage constraints?
- ORGANIZE:** What strategies for arrangement work best?




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Online tool for collecting information at kickoff



- We recommend a site planning document such as a Scope Definition Document



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Online tool for learning more about audience


- Personas really work!
- They give "names" to your actual users



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Online tool for focusing on tasks (purpose)

- Use verb lists and "learning taxonomy" to focus on tasks
- Offer tools to interviewees, too



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Online tool for comparing audience & purpose



- Evaluate Importance of Tasks to Each Audience Group
- Validate Task Importance With Stakeholders
- Compare Results

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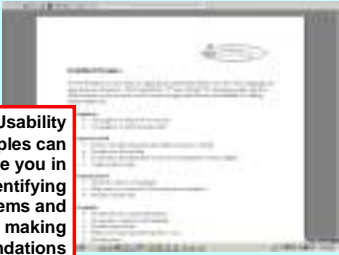
Online tool for filtering context



- Remember to think about the context of your users AND the context of your organization

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Online tool for testing heuristics (rules of thumb)



- Usability Principles can guide you in identifying problems and making recommendations

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Tools for sharing with your organization

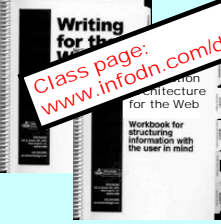


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The End (8 minutes are up)



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