

Information Architecture

Methods and Techniques

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Information Architecture

Information Architecture Parts

By Eleonora Babayants

Effective information architecture comes from understanding business objectives and constraints, content, and the requirements of the people that will use the site. There are three parts to information architecture: business/context, content, and users.

Business/Context

Understanding an organization's business objectives, politics, culture, technology, resources and constraints is essential before considering development of information architecture. Techniques for understanding context include:

- reading existing documentation;
- mission statements, organization charts, previous research and vision documents are a quick way of building up an understanding of the context in which the system must work;
- stakeholder interviews;
- speaking to stakeholders provides valuable insight into business context and can unearth previously unknown objectives and issues.

Content

The most effective method for understanding the quantity and quality of content (i.e. functionality and information) proposed for a system is to conduct a content inventory. Content inventories identify all of the proposed content for a

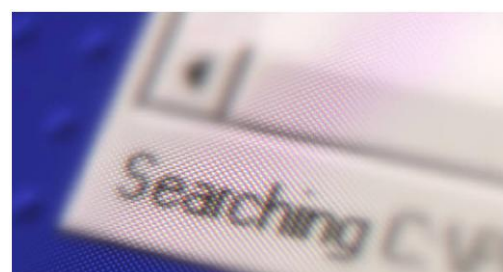
system, where the content currently resides, who owns it and any existing relationships between content. Content inventories are also commonly used to aid the process of migrating content between the old and new systems.

Effective information architecture must reflect the way people think about the subject matter. Techniques for getting users involved in the creation of information architecture include card sorting and card-based classification evaluation.

Card sorting involves representative users sorting a series of cards, each labelled with a piece of content or functionality, into groups that make sense to them. Card sorting generates ideas for how information could be grouped and labelled.

Card-based classification evaluation is a technique for testing information architecture before it has been implemented. The technique involves writing each level of information architecture on a large card, and developing a set of information-seeking tasks for people to perform using the architecture.

Time users waste being lost on your Intranet pondering how to find information is money you waste by paying them to be at work without getting work done. On customer facing websites and e-commerce websites, lost users on your website are lost customers and lost sales.



Information Architecture Parts

There are 3 parts to information architecture: business/context, content, and users.

Usable Information Architecture

Approaches to usable information architecture.



Industry News

- Video Content Platform for Microsoft Suite
- Perceptive Software Upgrades Search Solutions
- K2 Unveils Appit for SharePoint
- Bitrix24 Broadens Collaboration Capabilities

Usable Information Architecture

by Eleonora Babayants

There are two main approaches to defining information architecture. They are:

Top-down Information Architecture

This involves developing a broad understanding of the business strategies and user needs, before defining the high level structure of site, and finally the detailed relationships between content.

Bottom-up Information Architecture

This involves understanding the detailed relationships between content, creating walkthroughs (or storyboards) to show how the system could support specific user requirements and then considering the higher level structure that will be required to support these requirements.

Both of these techniques are important in a project. A project that ignores top-down approach may result in well-organized, findable content that does not meet the needs of users or the business.

A project that ignores bottom-up approach may result in a site that allows people to find information but does not allow them the opportunity to explore related content.

Take a structured approach to creating effective information architecture. Different websites require different types of information architecture.

What works best will vary based on things like how often content is updated, how much content there is, and how visitors use the site.

Developing information architecture in this way enables you to design and build a system confident that it will be successful. It simply isn't good enough for organizations to build functionality or write content, put it on their computer systems and expect people to be able to find it.

Developing effective information architecture is an essential step in the development of all computer systems. Effective information architectures enable people to quickly, easily and intuitively find content. This avoids frustration and increases the chance that the user will return to the system the next time they require similar information.

Remember: people can only appreciate what they can actually find.

Usable Information Architecture

It should be:

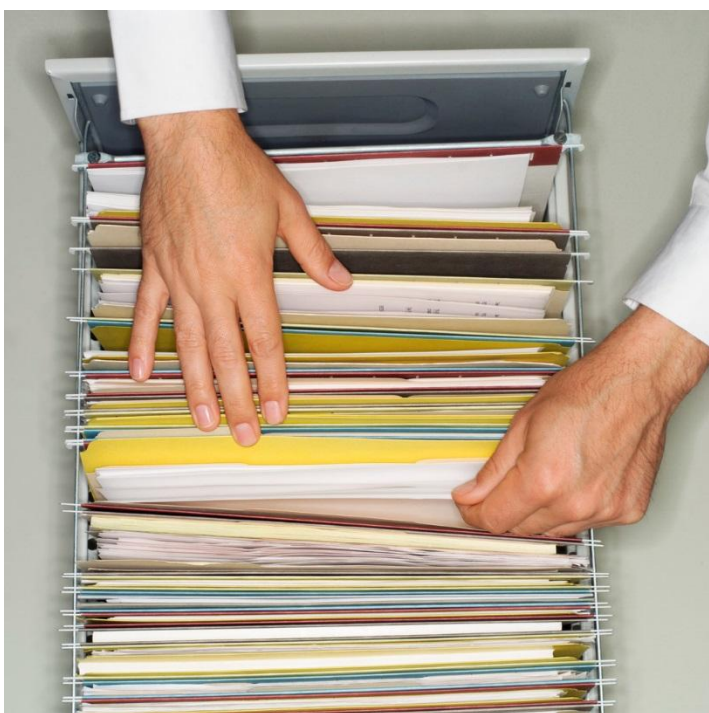
- Be easy to learn.
- Be consistent throughout the website, CMS, etc.
- Provide feedback, such as the use of breadcrumbs to indicate how to

navigate back to where the user started.

- Use the minimum number of clicks to arrive at the next destination.
- Use clear and intuitive labels, based on the user's perspective and terminology.
- Support user tasks.
- Have each link distinct from other links.
- Group navigation into logical units.
- Avoid making the user scroll to get to important navigation or submit buttons.
- Not disable the browser's back button.

A "bricks and mortar" architect must balance the demands of aesthetics, structural integrity, heating, lighting, water supply and drainage when creating building blueprints. Similarly, an information architect must create navigation schemes for web sites, content management systems, etc. that are at once concise, descriptive, mutually-exclusive, and intuitive. Both types of architects seek to create spaces for humans that are safe, predictable, enjoyable, and inspiring.

Keep the user experience at the forefront when making choices how best to present and organize content on your site



Industry News

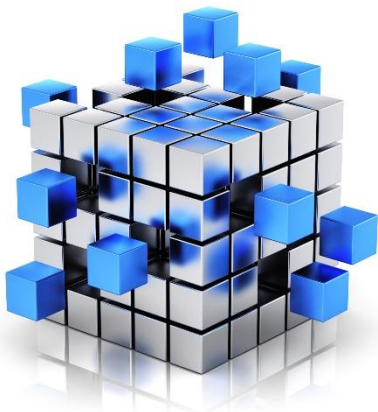
Video Content Platform for Microsoft Suite

RAMP has launched a video content platform (VCP) for organizations that have standardized on Microsoft Business Productivity infrastructure.

RAMP says its technology automatically transcribes the audio tracks in business videos and creates metadata, tags and business rules that can be used to transform the viewer's experience. The company explains customers can provide their viewers with deep search within the video's spoken word, the ability to navigate through the video using jump-to tags and dynamically display related content based on the context of the video being watched.

Perceptive Software Upgrades Search Solutions

Perceptive Software has unveiled Version 10.3 of both Perceptive Enterprise Search and Perceptive Workgroup Search. The company says Version 10.3 delivers search results that represent content in high definition, and that most types of documents, when searched, will be displayed in HTML5 with all formatting, images and styles preserved. Users view documents indexed in high definition with a full set of document controls.



K2 Unveils Appit for SharePoint

K2 has released K2 Appit, delivering no-code workflow apps for SharePoint Server 2013 and Microsoft Online. K2 says with the launch of SharePoint 2013 and SharePoint Online, Microsoft introduced a new Office app model allowing solution developers to deploy SharePoint-based Web apps that function natively within SharePoint, on-premises or in the cloud.

Bitrix24 Broadens Collaboration Capabilities

Bitrix24 has launched a new desktop app for its online collaboration service that adds the ability to synchronize and work with group and company files, and includes the activity stream and collaboration tools. Along with sharing, editing and collaborating on documents with colleagues, the new app makes it possible to send instant messages to co-workers, participate in group chat, make telephone calls and hold video conferences with other Bitrix24 users.

It also includes other Bitrix24 service enhancements, such as call history and bill itemization for telephony, the capability to define one's own outbound phone number, a floating window for video calls in the desktop app and a duplicates search feature in the customer relationship management function. The mobile app for Bitrix24 has also been updated.

About Galaxy Consulting



Galaxy Consulting was founded with the mission and vision of helping organizations to manage their valuable information assets. Many of our clients, both large and small, have dramatically improved efficiency and reduced unnecessary labor hours through efficient methods, processes, and solutions we created.

Galaxy Consulting believes in partnerships with our clients. We are committed to working with you and to helping you transform your business. We will increase efficiency and productivity, maintain regulatory and legal compliance, improve collaboration, enhance innovation, and reduce costs through effective information management!

Call us TODAY to schedule a free, no obligation consultation!

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Galaxy Consulting provides services in business analysis and usability, content and knowledge management, records management, information architecture, enterprise search, taxonomy development and management, document control, and information governance.