

***Glossary of
Information Architecture
Terms & Definitions
Online IA Tutorial***

*Assisting Information Architects and Others to Learn about
Information Architecture and Usability Testing;
Promoting Professionalism and Standardization of Information Architecture*



IA Design & Usability

Topic: The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

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http://www.stevenheitman-ia.com/html/module_1.html

Appendix E

A

Above the Fold: The region of a Web page that is visible without scrolling.

(Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Ad Hoc Navigational Systems: Links placed randomly in a Website or Web page, when that category does not fit into the main contextual elements in other navigational systems.

AJAX and CSS: AJAX is defined to mean: Asynchronous JavaScript and XML. AJAX is a group of inter-related Web development techniques used for creating interactive Websites or Web applications.

Anchor Links: Anchor links can be used on content pages that contain several (usually three or more) screenfuls of information. They allow end users to skip through text on Websites, resulting in a more efficient information-finding process. They are best arranged as a table of contents for the Web page.

(Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Apple Macintosh Computer, The Power Macintosh: A computer with a hard-disk and screen, designed to be easy to use by the end user, with built-in sound, high-quality color graphics display capabilities, a keyboard, and a point-and-click device called a mouse. The Power Macintosh is one of Apple's latest computers, and has a Power PC chip and many multimedia features.

Assistive Technologies: Computing technologies include software or hardware that increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities, when interacting with computers or computer-based systems.

(Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

B

Bandwidth: It refers to the size of the data pipeline where the data travels through cyberspace to a telephone wire or a high-speed cable to the end user.

Basic to Simple Navigational Systems: A navigational bar placed at the top of Web page, or in a variety of positions on a Web page; that makes navigation possible in a Website, Web page, or subsite.

Breadcrumbs: Breadcrumbs are a navigational element that allows end users to orient themselves within a Website, or efficiently move to one of the intermediate pages. They are placed near the top of the page (generally immediately beneath the browser's address bar). (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Browser: A software program that allows the end user to view Websites on the World Wide Web (commonly used browsers include Netscape Navigator, Microsoft Internet Explorer, Opera, et al.).

C

Card Sorting: A method used to identify categories that are inherent in a set of items. The goal of card sorting is to understand how a typical end user views a given set of items. The grouping information from all card sorters is then combined and analyzed using cluster analysis software. Helps Information Architects to better understand end users' needs prior to designing Websites, (user-centered design). (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Cascading Menu: A menu structure where submenus open when the end user selects a choice from a menu and used in hierarchically-complex Websites. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

CERN: The European Physics Lab, at the Particle Physics Laboratory, in Geneva, Switzerland. In 1991, Tim Berners-Lee, a British citizen, developed the World Wide Web at CERN. (Source: <http://public.web.cern.ch/Public/Welcome.html>).

Clickability Cues: A visual indication that a given word or item on a Web page is clickable. Cues that can be used to indicate the clickability of an item include color, underlining, bullets, and arrows. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Cognitive Walkthrough: An inspection method for evaluating the design of an end user's interface, with special attention to how well the interface supports 'exploratory learning,' that is, first-time use without formal training. Having a group of evaluators go step-by-step through commonly used tasks, then the evaluation is accomplished. Evaluators can perform it in the early stages of design, before performance testing is possible. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Complex Navigational Systems: Many navigational systems used in conjunction with a browser and in various different combinations.

Connection Speed: The maximum rate at which Web pages are downloaded to an end user's computer; often quoted in bps (bits per second). Common connection speeds include dial-up (modem) at 56,000 bps, DSL/cable at 500,000 bps or higher, and T1 at 1,500,000 bps or higher. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Contextual Categories. The way information is designed and organized within a Website that helps the end user to better understand textual components as they relate to the overall Website. Global and local navigational systems are also used to help organize all of the different components to provide better comprehension by the end user.

Cookie: A trail left by a Website that the end user had previously visited while being online; a text file left on the end user's hard-disk drive. The end user will be recognized by the cookie at a future date when online using a specific Website.

Cyberspace: The Internet where Websites, Web pages, and subsites live; the end user goes online to visit different Website addresses.

D

Design Plan for Information Architecture: A plan written to specify Information Architecture and end users' needs, including usability testing requirements.

Digital-Media Designer: A graphic designer that uses specific software programs (InDesign, QuarkXPress, Photoshop, Illustrator), for creation of digital documents for printed collateral, multimedia, or for Website design.

Download Time: The amount of time required for a requested Web page to fully appear on an end user's monitor. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

E

E-commerce: Business conducted on the Internet. The buying and selling of retail goods on the Internet (referred to as e-tailing, e-business, or electronic retailing). The consumer may purchase items by using his credit card.

E-mail: Electronic mail that is sent over the Internet to end user. The end user retrieves his e-mail from his browser on his computer or Telnet.

End User: A person (end user) that uses the Internet from a remote location: such as an office, library, or from one's home to go online and view Websites.

Enterprise Architecture for E-Commerce: Enterprise Architecture for E-Commerce is the way in which an Information Architect organizes “logic” for “business processes and IT infrastructure,” reflecting conceptual integration and standardizing the firm's operating model. These practitioners are referred to as Enterprise Architecture practitioners.

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The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

10

E-zine: A magazine published on the World Wide Web—short for electronic magazine.

F

Flow Chart (Schematic): A plan, schematic, illustration, drawing that provides one with a blueprint structure, directions of movement, and relationships in the Website. An Information Architect uses Visio for producing a variety of schematics to document research and communicate findings to stakeholders or team members.

Fold: The fold is defined as the lowest point where a Web page is no longer visible on a computer monitor or screen. Where on a Web page the fold falls is a function of the monitor size, the screen resolution, and the font size selection. The information that is visible when a Web page first loads is considered to be ‘above the fold.’ Those regions of the same Web page that are visible only by scrolling are considered to be ‘below the fold.’ (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

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The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

12

Frames: A type of formatting for Web pages where one may define several windows in a browser's window that are viewed concurrently.

FTP: File Transfer Protocol—a protocol for sending digital files over the Internet.

G

Global Navigational Systems: The main navigational system that remain consistent but global, throughout the entire Website, and are commonly placed on every Web page in a Website. They are considered to be the main navigational system for the entire Website.

Graphic Communication: The way graphical elements are designed and communicated through any visual media.

Graphic Design (Interface Design, and Typography): Graphic Design, et al., is a field that involves the design of graphical elements, photographs, illustrations, typography, use of colors, historical elements within a given context, ornamental designs, collages, typographical designs that make Websites more appealing to end users. If the Information Architecture and user-centered design are appropriately incorporated into overall Web page or Website designs, then combined with graphic design and typography might enhance interface designs within Websites.

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The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

14

Graphic Designer: A graphic artist who makes use of the various elements of typography, illustration, and photography utilized in the design of digital or print media. Graphic Designers can also do Interface Design for Websites or digital design products—within the parameters of the Internet industry.

Grid: A method of graphic and Web page design that follows strict placement of the design on the Web page congruent throughout the entire Website.

H

Heuristic Evaluation: An inspection method for finding certain types of usability problems in a user interface design. Heuristic evaluation includes having one or more usability specialists individually examine the interface and assess its compliance with recognized usability principles. These usability principles are the 'heuristics' from which the method takes its name. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Hierarchical Navigational Systems: The way information or content on a Website is organized congruently from the first, or index, page to the sub pages underneath the home page.

Home Page: The first page of a Website. Usually, where end users enter a Website.

Hotspot: It is commonly known as a button, graphical element, or textual element that reacts and changes when the cursor or blinking I-beam touches it.

HTML: HyperText Markup Language. The code used to construct Web pages for Websites.

HTTP: HyperText Transfer Protocol. It is the protocol on which the World Wide Web is based. It sets the rules for how data is requested and sent in Web servers to the end user.

Human-Computer Interaction and Human Factors: Human-Computer Interaction and Human Factors are terms that might cover these items: The science of understanding the properties of human capability is referred to as Human Factors Science. The application of this understanding to the design and development of systems, and services on Websites is referred to as Human Factors Engineering. The art of ensuring successful application of Human Factors Engineering to Websites is sometimes referred to as Humans Factors Integration. The term “human factors” is to a large extent synonymous with the term “ergonomics.”



Image Map: A graphical element or iconic element that is on a Web page and linked to other Web pages or URLs outside the main Website. The end user can click and point on image map to move from point A to point B.

Index Navigational Systems: An index placed on a Web page with hypertext links or graphical elements that enable the end user to navigate within a Website.

Information Architect: The person responsible for the design, organization of the Website's information and content within a Website, including writing design reports, writing statements of work reports, researching and writing personas including user scenarios, drawing wire frame mockups in Visio, producing flow charts and schematics, designing navigational systems and search functions, prototyping, card sorting sessions, questionnaires, focus groups, usability testing (to include user-centered design practices and “best practices” prior to final implementation and using The Information Architecture Model), and project management. The Information Architect works with graphic designers, interface

designers, HTML programmers or computer programmers, content developers, subject matter experts, et al., and stakeholders on projects to build Websites or other digital design products.

Information Design: The design of informational structures within a given field (digital, print based). Drawing upon design skills combined with basic architectural, graphic arts, communication, Information Architecture, behavioral research, as it relates to the World Wide Web, Internet, Websites, Web pages, and subsites.

Information Graphics: Information Graphics are important components to Information Architecture because they might help end users to navigate better. These Graphics are visual representations of data used in conjunction with text. They might assist learners to learn faster on Websites. When appropriate, Information Graphics might lessen a learner’s cognitive load. The old saying “a picture is worth a thousand words” is relevant and gives end users visual clues.

Information Superhighway: A high-capacity telecommunication's network that carries large amounts of binary data to the end user. Al Gore stated in 1992, he desired that an information superhighway be built across the United States of America that would carry data delivered through the Internet that contained training programs and educational materials to every home.

Information Systems: The field and study of Information Systems originated as a sub-discipline of Computer Science. Per current trends, Information Systems for companies is: "to understand and rationalize the management of technology within organizations. It has matured into a major field of management, that is, increasingly being emphasized as an important area of research in management studies."

Instructional Designer: The person who applies instructional learning theory to the organization and design of learning programs, including designing meaningful learning and instructional materials; designs Websites and/or digital design products as well as incorporating Information Architecture and user-centered design principles into digital design products.

Integrated Navigational Systems: Global and local navigational systems integrated together for more comprehensive navigational systems in a Website. That means fully integrated navigational systems working harmoniously together on Websites or other digital design products.

Interactive: The end user manipulates, has control over, and is able to make online transactions on a Website.

Interactive Website: A Website where the design has multimedia features incorporated into the overall structure of the Website.

Interface Design: The graphic design of Web pages for Websites; designers work to achieve harmonious interface designs for Websites and attractive to clients and end users, communicating well thought out ideas about branding, providing aesthetically pleasing interface designs within Internet design and technological parameters.

Internet: Global networks of computers where data is exchanged over the telephone line or cable line through the modem.

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The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

21

ISP: Internet Service Provider. A company that provides the end user with a connection to the Internet through a modem and telephone line or high-speed cable, so the end user may use the Internet to view Web pages.

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The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

22

J

No entry.

K

Keyword: A word that is used as a reference point for finding other words or information using a search capability in a Website. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).



Languages (Internet Industry): AJAX, HTML, DHTML, XHTML, XML, tags, modeling languages, VRML, Java, JavaScript, and Perl.

Local Navigational Systems: Navigational systems used to supplement the global navigational system.

M

Microsoft Internet Explorer Browser: The software program that the end user utilizes on the computer to view Websites online.

Minesweeping: An action designed to identify where on a page links are located. Minesweeping involves the user rapidly moving the cursor or pointer over a page, watching to see where the cursor or pointer changes to indicate the presence of a link. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Modem: The device that enables the end user's computer to communicate with the telephone line or cable line with the Internet.

Mouse: A device controlled by the end user's hand to perform input and pointing on the computer screen in order to interact within the computer's environment.

Mouseover: A Web interaction where some visually-apparent change occurs to an item when the end user's cursor or pointer is placed over the item (highlighted

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The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

26

links, words, or images changing shape when a mouseover occurs). (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Multimedia: The many different disciplines of design and technology brought together that include elements of graphic design combined with sound and video—usually interactive—on CD-ROMs, the World Wide Web or Internet, virtual reality, and 3-D games.

N

Navigation: The way the end user finds information and moves from point A to point B within a Website—wayfinding, sense-making, and navigating.

Navigational Systems: Hypertext links, graphical elements or icons, a search engine included within the Website, index or table of contents, used to assist the end user in finding information within a Website.

Netscape Browser: The software program that the end user utilizes on the computer to view Websites online.

Newsgroup: An electronic bulletin board that is an Internet service that allows the end user to post his remarks or chat with other end users on the Internet, who may respond to all of the remarks posted on an Internet bulletin board.

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The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

28

O

No entry.

P

Page Title: Page title refers to text located in the browser title bar (bar found at the very top of the screen of common browsers). (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

PC: A personal computer that runs Windows, (similar to a Macintosh computer); it has a screen, keyboard, mouse, and disk drive.

Performance Objectives: The goals set for end user behaviors on an individual Web page or a series of Web pages or Websites. These objectives usually are stated in terms of the time to correctly select a link, the overall accuracy of selecting links, the average time to select a target page, etc. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Performance Test: A usability test that is characterized by having typical end users perform a series of tasks where their speed, accuracy and success are closely monitored and measured. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Point and Click: The mouse is connected to a computer at the keyboard. It has a point-and-click action and is well suited for using multimedia software, interacting within Websites. Different point shapes are used to indicate when the point touches a hotspot or when the program is pausing to load new data. When the end user clicks on a hyperlink or hotspot in a Website or other interactive media, the cursor turns into a hand icon that when clicked on will take the end user to next point.

Process Architecture: Process Architecture relates to Information Architecture, since it is the “structural design of general process systems and applies to fields such as computers, software, hardware, networks, etc.” It also applies to “business processes” in Enterprise Architecture, policy and procedures, logistics, project management, etc.” Any type of Process Architecture works better when a good model is used to improve performance, including achieving superior quality-control.

Pull-Down Menu: A pull-down menu used to assist the end user in getting to the next Web page, Website, or URL.

Current Trends—Information Architecture & Usability Testing

The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

31

Q

No entry.

R

Real Estate: This refers to the amount of space on a Web page and the placement of graphical elements.

Remote Navigational Systems: Supplemental navigational systems that include table of contents, an index, or site map. These navigational systems may make up the subparts of a main navigational system used in conjunction with global, local navigational systems.

Rollover: A graphical or typographical icon placed on Web pages that change when the mouse touches it. An aid to navigational systems since it may provide instructions or clues to the end user about navigating.

S

Screen Reader: A software program used to allow reading of content and navigation of the screen using speech or Braille output. Used primarily by end users (people) who have difficulty seeing. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Screen Shot: A graphical image taken off the computer screen that the end user views.

Scrolling: When an end user moves up or down on a Web page, using the scrollbar on the right side of the window or on the bottom of the window in a browser.

Search Engine: A field on the Web page where the end user can enter desired keywords to find what he is looking for in a Website, and the built-in feature with HTML code or codes that allows for the search engine to scan the entire Website. The search engine can scan an entire Website everyday and produce an index for every possible *new* entry.

Section Header: The main header on a Web page above the text used for identification and navigation in a Website.

Sense-Making: An approach to research that enables a researcher to figure out what the end user's own reality is by testing the subject.

Server: The client-server system where the computer holds the digital data to be transferred from the server to the end user's computer when online.

Server-Side (Image Map): Occurring on the server side of a client-server system (CGI scripts are server-side application because they run on the Web server. In contrast, JavaScript scripts are client-side (because they are executed by the browser—the client). Java applets can be either server-side or client-side depending on which computer executes them. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Site Address: The URL address that appears in the browser's window.

Site Map of Navigational Systems: A diagram or map that visually represents the entire Website on one Web page. The end user can point and click to navigate. The term may also be defined as a flow chart that shows Information Architecture for a Website.

Subsite: A Website or multiple Websites nested below a main Website.

Current Trends—Information Architecture & Usability Testing

The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

35

Surfing: The end user goes online via modem to do exploration, research, or to find information on the World Wide Web, navigating on the World Wide Web or in cyberspace, moving from point A to point B within Websites on the Internet.

T

Tab: A graphical navigation element that is most often placed at the top of a Web page. Effective tabs should be designed so that they resemble real-world file folder tabs. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Taxonomy and Information Architecture: Taxonomy, with reference to Information Architecture, refers to arrangements, hierarchical structures on Websites (Morville & Rosenfeld, 2006); “narrow and deep; broad and shallow.” It includes the classification of lists or how navigational systems might be structured, “sub-type and super-type,” “parent-child relationships,” including “relationship schemas.” Taxonomy is quite important to overall architecture design relationships because it adds structure to Websites.

Telecommunications: Communication by any electronic means via telephone, cell phone, television (Web TV), telegraph, World Wide Web, and the Internet.

Current Trends—Information Architecture & Usability Testing

The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

37

Telnet: A protocol that allows a computer on the Internet to run programs stored on another computer over the Internet.

U

URL: Uniform Resource Locator—the address of a Website on the World Wide Web or Internet.

Usability Testing: Usability testing includes a range of test and evaluation methods that include automated evaluations, inspection evaluations, operational evaluations, and human performance testing. End users perform tests using paper or online prototypes End users' perform a variety of tasks, while observers take notes or video taped and data recorded. The main goal of usability testing is to identify issues that keep users from meeting the usability goals of a Website.

(Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

User-Centered Design: A Website that is designed with the end users' specific needs in mind from the onset of a project; sometimes Information Architects do card sorting with participants or other activities, like interviews or focus groups. Research-based information is included in a design plan or statement of work plan prior to implementation to provide a plan for projects prior to designing Websites.

User Experience Architecture: User Experience Architecture is a field that derived its roots in “human factors” and “ergonomics” since the late 1940s. The focus is on how humans interact with computers. These specialized practitioners always address end users' experience before designing Websites or other digital design products.

V

Visio: Visio (Microsoft) is used by Information Architects to draw and produce diagrams, schematics, wire frame mockups, and flow charts to document researched-based findings about the requirements and technical specifications for Information Architecture on Websites or other digital design products. These documents are oftentimes included in Information Architecture Design Plan, and clients or stakeholders review diagrams, approve, and sign off on diagrams prior to production.

W

Wayfinding: The perceptual and psychological behavioral patterns associated with navigating to a location (in relation to the World Wide Web, but formally associated with Information Architecture) navigating in cyberspace.

Web Designer: The person who does design, layout, and production of Websites; the professional design practitioner who designs Websites.

Web Development and Process: The process by which a Website, Web page, and subsite is designed, implemented (by a team) and includes: goal definition, Information Architecture, interface design, content creation, scripting and computer programming, testing, publishing, and implementation.

Web Indexing (Internet Indexing): Web Indexing, a part of Information Architecture, or Internet indexing includes indexes, like those found in books. Information Architects do research to figure out what keyword's and/or metadata to provide a good and meaningful or useful vocabulary for Internet or "onsite search engines." Given current trends and high-volumes of end users on the

Internet—that means an “increase in the number of periodicals that have articles online.”

Web Page: One page on the World Wide Web but commonly part of a Website.

Web 2.0 Technologies: Web 2.0 Technologies is a current trend in the use of the World Wide Web and Internet technologies. It is Web design or Websites designed to foster information sharing, creativity, and collaboration among end users or learners. These concepts have led to the development and evolution of Web-based communities, hosted services, social-networking Websites, Wikis (Websites that allows visitors to add, remove, edit and change content, typically without the need for registration.), Blogs (sites where end user make journal entries), and Folksonomies (Collaboratively generated, open-ended labeling systems that enables Internet users to categorize content such as Web pages, online photographs. End users tag content with metadata or information based on their personal preferences. Folksonomies allow any user to add comments or information that other users can take advantage of when looking for or organizing their own information.)

Website: A Website has a home page and multiple Web pages and has numerous hypertext links, rollovers, navigational systems, search functions, shopping carts, et al., graphical elements, or image maps used as links—used online by end users.

Website Design Architecture: The process that the Information Architect uses to map and plan out Website structures to create effective, solid Information Architecture for a Website.

Widget: Screen-based controls that are used to interact with a Website and other systems. Widgets include pushbuttons, selection lists, radio buttons, sliders, etc. (Source: <http://www.usability.gov>).

Wire Frame Mockup: Information Architects draw wire frames in Visio for detailed specifications on interface designs, navigational systems for Websites, including detailed annotations if required. (Source: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/visio/default.aspx>).

World Wide Web: A computer network made up of Websites where graphical elements, hypertext, multimedia, and interactive media may be included. Cyberspace is where Websites are placed for viewing and retrieval of data by end users.

Current Trends—Information Architecture & Usability Testing

The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

44

X

No entry.

Current Trends—Information Architecture & Usability Testing

The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

45

Y

No entry.

Current Trends—Information Architecture & Usability Testing

The Creative Information Architecture Model—The IA Model

An Online Tutorial for Instructional Designers to Learn about Information Architecture

Online Information Architecture Tutorial—Glossary

46

Z

No entry.