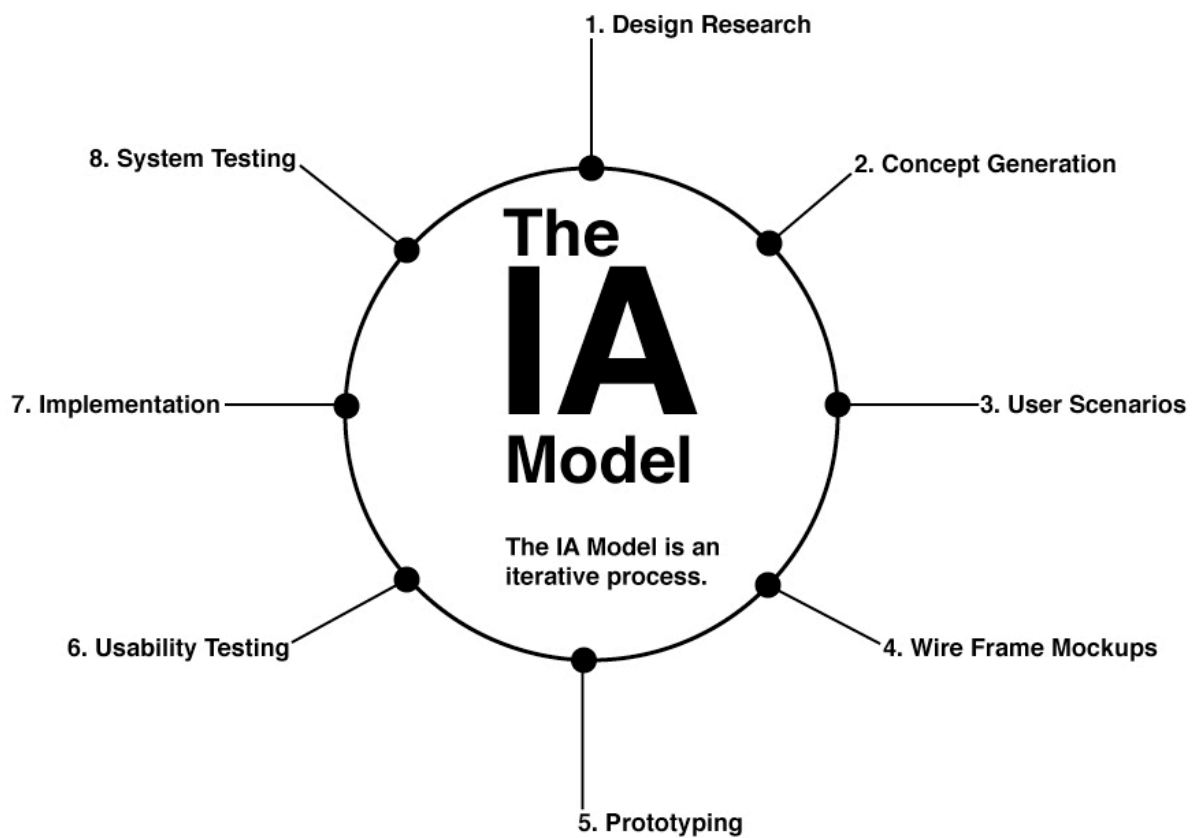


Information Architecture Tutorial—Taking a Systematic Approach

The Creative Information Architecture Model (The IA Model)



Relevance of Information Architecture—Usability Testing & Quality Control

Table of Contents

| | Pages |
|---|--------------|
| Section 1.0 | |
| Introduction: Information Architecture | 3-5 |
| | |
| Section 2.0 | |
| Instructional Design Website: | |
| http://www.infed.org/index.htm (Matrix, Screenshots, WFMS) | 6-9 |
| | |
| Section 3.0 | |
| Portfolio Website, Information Architect: | |
| Christian Crumlish | |
| http://christiancrumlish.com (Matrix, Screenshots, WFM) | 10-12 |
| | |
| Section 4.0 | |
| Web 2.0, Social Networking: | |
| http://www.flickr.com (Matrix, Screenshots, WFM) | 13-15 |
| | |
| Section 5.0 | |
| Conclusion: Using The IA Model | 16-17 |

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Section 1.0

Introduction: Information Architecture

What is The IA Model?

1. Design Research
2. Concept Generation
3. Creation of Scenarios
4. Wire Frame Mockups
5. Prototyping
6. Usability Testing
7. Implementation
8. System Testing

What is an Information Architect?

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 (Adobe Creative Suite), producing flow charts and schematics (Visio, Inspiration, OmniGraffle), 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 IA 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.

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Doing Information Architecture

The Information Architect starts out by defining your Website's goals.

Design research begins by asking questions:

1. What is the mission, goal, or purpose of your organization?
 2. What are the short-term and long-term goals for your Website?
 3. Do you know who the intended audiences will be?
 4. Why will people (end users) use your Website?
- The Information Architect develops a list of questions together and interview people on a one-to-one basis or at a company meeting. After one receives feedback from everyone involved, do begin to write a design plan.
 - The Information Architect defines user experience. Now it is time to interview people in the marketing department or other departments. Then write a few personas and eventually user scenarios.
 - What is a persona?
 - A persona is a fictional person who represents a major user group for your site. Usually, an Information Architect creates 8 to 20-plus personas with photos, depending on the complexity of the Website.
 - The next step might be to do a competitive analysis or a case study about your competitor's Websites, including documentation about functionality, style, design, color, information architecture, and navigational systems. This information can be included in the design plan. At this point in the process, it is important to think about the content and structure of the Website. Then create a list of content and functional requirements.
 - From the design plan, identify the content and functional requirements necessary for your Website. Now start to organize your content and define the Website's architecture (Technical Writing). This is the basis for defining the major sections of the Website as well as the headers for each section.

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- Do document this information in a design plan. Think about exploring the use of metaphors as a way of organizing information and navigational systems in terms of using icons.
 - Can an end user understand what your icons mean?
 - At this point in the process, do create a site map, blueprint, and/or flow chart to document Website's structure (Visio). Then navigational systems are designed and developed into the overall structure of your Website.
- In the design plan, do document your Website's structure and global and local navigational systems. It helps to have graphic designers, art directors, as well as creative directors involved in the design process.
- Start by drawing wire frame mockups that show the structure for a Web page. Wire frame mockups visually represent the structure of a Web page—sketched out by the Information Architect using (Adobe Create Suite), and assists graphic designers to create a graphically designed Web page. Wire frame mockups can be sketched out, or develop working prototypes (Rapid Prototyping).
- Document details in your design plan. Now the team is ready to build a Website. Do not forget to do usability testing to make sure design product works for end users. Always include end users at the beginning of any project to incorporate usability into your design product (user-centered design).

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| Section 2.0 Instructional Design Website: http://www.infed.org/index.htm Matrix for Information Architecture Research Questions: | 3 Excellent | 2 Good | 1 Poor |
|---|------------------|--------|-----------------|
| Ease of Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unity of Web page design • Predictable and clear navigation • 1-3 clicks to get to information • Aesthetically pleasing design | 3 | 2 | 1 1 |
| Remarks: Overall, this Website is quite easy to use. The only problem is that no consistent navigational systems are used. The navigation is not clear or very predictable because an end user lands on different pages with no way out. Affordances for end users are not incorporated into design. Many links are very redundant and serve no purpose. There is no consistent Web page design; no consistent main navigational systems used—navigating for end user is unproductive—since this type of design lends itself to assisting end users to get lost while using this design product. | | | |
| User Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legibility and reading speed • Good use of the screen in all resolutions • Printer-friendliness • Browser compatibility • Respect interface standards • Icons work or do not work • Use of colors | 3 | 2 2 | 1 1 1 |
| Remarks: Overall, the user experience is quite poor. While the Web page, design is somewhat pleasing; one does not really know what the icons represent without prior knowledge of subject matter. The gray squares boxes at the top on the right side serve no purpose. The type size on most Web pages is too small and difficult to read. | | | |
| Practical Value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informative homepage • Contact information • Search and search results • Up to date and correct information • Language and copywriting appropriate/not appropriate | 3 3 3 3 | | 1 |
| Remarks: Overall, the homepage is not very informative because the purpose of the Website is not clearly defined. In terms of practical value, (without really having prior knowledge) it is hard to understand the practical value of this Website. Since this is supposed to be a Website about instructional design, the end user should be able to access relevant information about instructional easily. Unfortunately, it is hard to get the information since it is so buried in the Website. | | | |

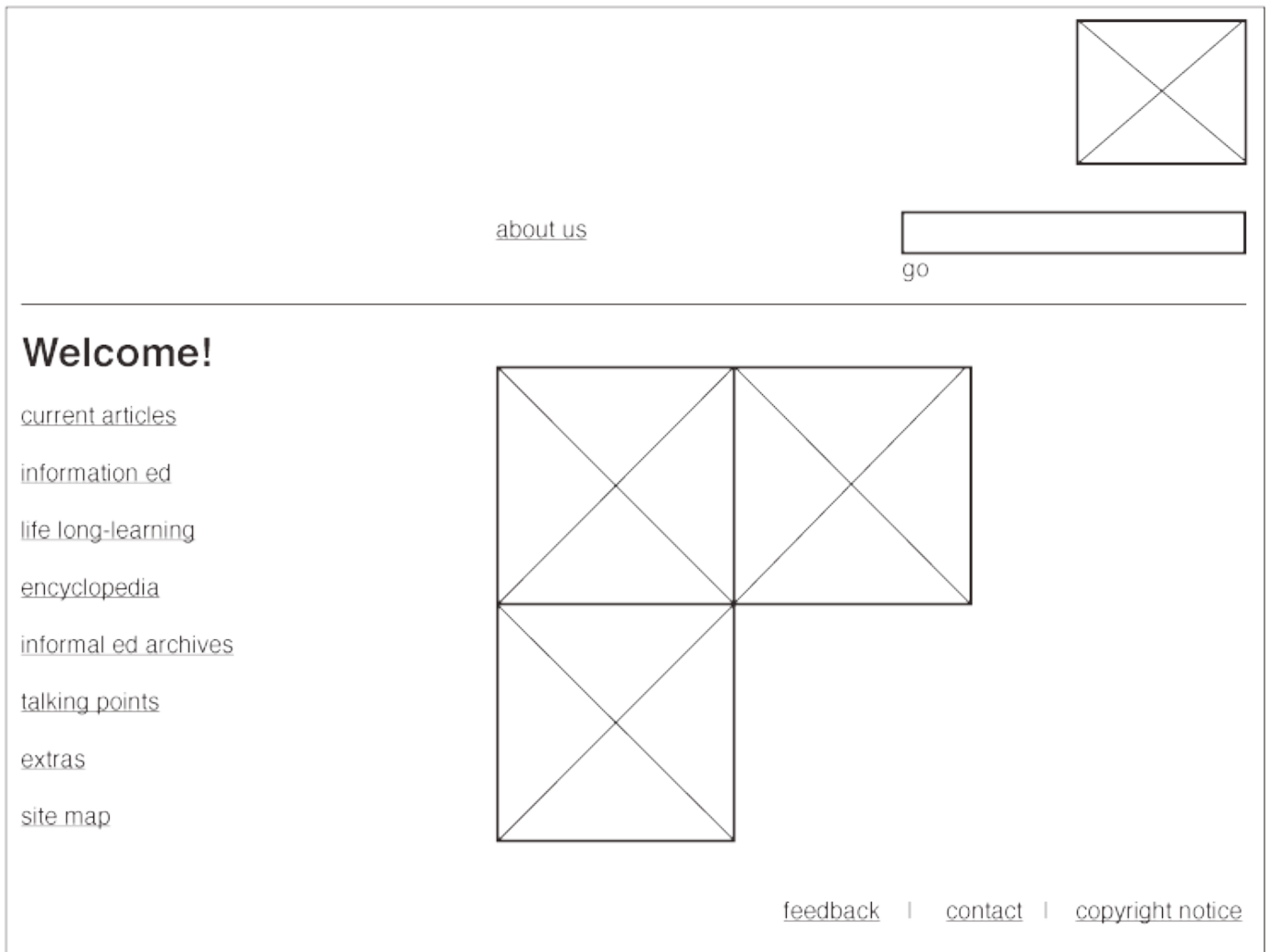
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Screenshots omitted.

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Section 2.9

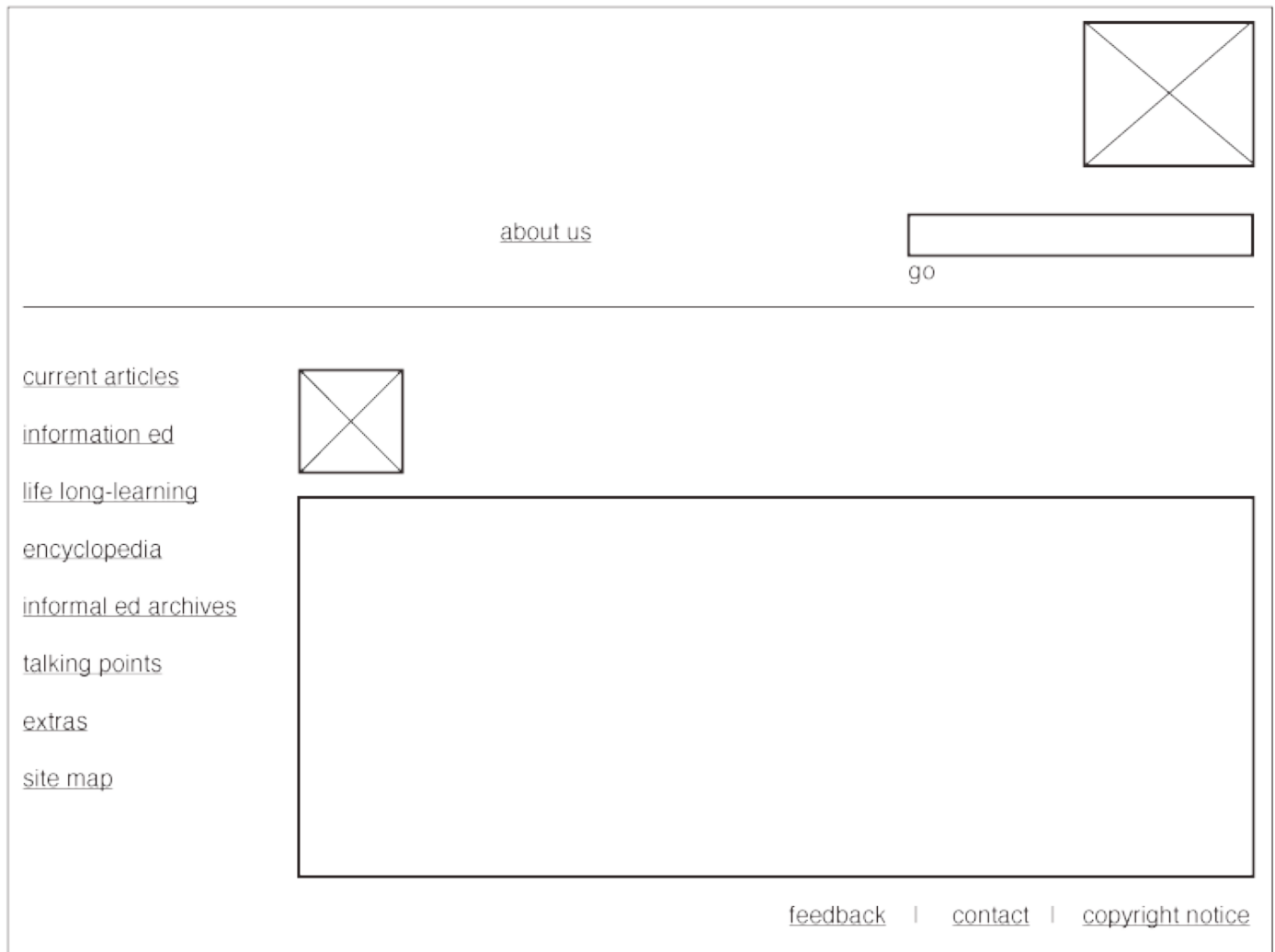
Figure 2.9: Suggested Redesign in Wire Frame Mockup Form



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Section 2.10

Figure 2.10: Suggested Redesign in Wire Frame Mockup Form (Sub Web pages)



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| Section 3.0 Portfolio Website, Information Architect, Christian Crumlish: http://christiancrumlish.com Matrix for Information Architecture Research Questions: | 3 Excellent | 2 Good | 1 Poor |
|--|-------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Ease of Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unity of Web page design • Predictable and clear navigation • 1-3 clicks to get to information • Aesthetically pleasing design | | | 1 1 1 1 1 |
| Remarks: Overall, this Website lacks in structure. The home page does not give any information or state the purpose of this Website clearly. There are no main or sub navigational systems in place. There is no explanation as to why all of these ad hoc links are placed on the main Web page. | | | |
| User Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legibility and reading speed • Good use of the screen in all resolutions • Printer-friendliness • Browser compatibility • Respect interface standards • Icons work or do not work • Use of colors | 3 | 2 2 2 | 1 1 1 1 |
| Remarks: Overall, the user experience is quite poor. This Website cannot stand alone since there is no annotation or clear explanation about it. I found other Web pages (links) downloaded quite slowly. The main icon (sketched man with glasses) on first Web page is not used consistently across the overall Website. | | | |
| Practical Value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informative homepage • Contact information • Search and search results • Up to date and correct information • Language and copywriting appropriate/not appropriate | | | 1 1 1 1 1 |
| Remarks: Overall, the homepage is not very informative no information is shared with end user. What is the purpose of this Website? The homepage lacks in providing any pertinent information to end users. In addition, other ad hoc links were broken. | | | |

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Screenshots omitted.

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Section 3.16

Figure 3.16: Suggested Redesign in Wire Frame Mockup Form

Cristian Crumlish
Information Architect
Interaction Designer

[bio](#) [portfolio](#) [résumé](#) [contact](#) [site map](#)

> bio

Author of *The Power of Many: How the Living Web is Transforming Business, Politics, and Everyday Life*.
<<http://thepowerofmany.com/>>

Curator of the Yahoo! Design Pattern Library.

I founded [Mediajunkie.com](#), a digital media agency that consults with creative talent to help them produce and distribute their work across multiple media formats and advises social media startups on their go-to-market strategies.

I am on the board of directors of the Information Architecture Institute, and helped found East Bay for Democracy (I host the [CivicSpace](#) site for the group). I am also on the advisory committee for [MAPlight.org](#), and am an advisor for [NewAssignment.net](#).

I've consulted in the arena of web-application design and development for such Fortune 500 companies as FedEx, SanDisk, Schwab, Kodak, Sprint, Visa, and Sun, among others, generally on matters of web strategy, information architecture, interaction design, content strategy, content development, information design, interfaces / user experience process flows, and knowledge management.

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| Section 4.0 Web 2.0: http://www.flickr.com Matrix for Information Architecture Research Questions: | 3 Excellent | 2 Good | 1 Poor |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Ease of Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unity of Web page design • Predictable and clear navigation • 1-3 clicks to get to information • Aesthetically pleasing design | | 2 | 1 1 1 |
| Remarks: Overall, this Website is a nice Website where end users can share photos. The only problem is that no consistent navigational systems are used. There is no main navigational system in place. When you go to other Web pages, you cannot navigate back to homepage. | | | |
| User Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legibility and reading speed • Good use of the screen in all resolutions • Printer-friendliness • Browser compatibility • Respect interface standards • Icons work or do not work • Use of colors | 3 | 2 2 2 | 1 1 1 |
| Remarks: Overall, the user experience is quite confusing, even I get lost using this design product all the time. The homepage is very cluttered and hard to read. The type is oftentimes too small as well as difficult to read for end users. | | | |
| Practical Value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informative homepage • Contact information • Search and search results • Up to date and correct information • Language and copywriting appropriate/not appropriate | 3 3 3 | | 1 1 |
| Remarks: Overall, this Website has some practical value for end users. | | | |

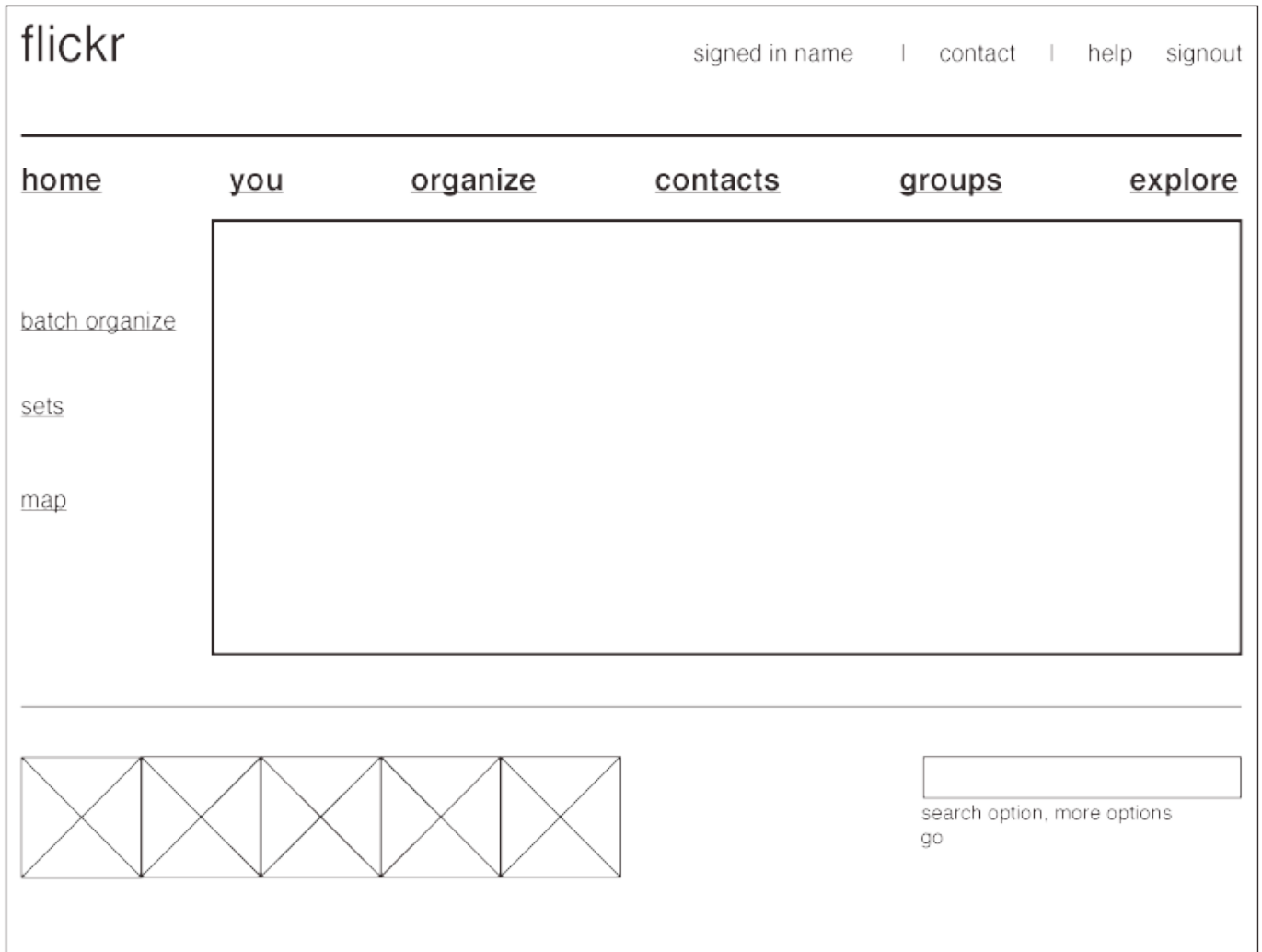
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Screenshots omitted.

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Section 4.4

Figure 4.4: Suggested Redesign in Wire Frame Mockup Form



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Section 5.0

Conclusion: Using The IA Model

Again, what is The IA Model?

1. Design Research
2. Concept Generation
3. Creation of Scenarios
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After reviewing this brief tutorial, can you see why Information Architecture is so important to the design of Websites?

Maybe *not*—or maybe—*yes*!

Anyone can put up a Website these days. However, doing the Information Architecture and Design Plan help to provide a Website to end users or learners that meets their needs, goal, objectives, and better meaningful learning experiences. Now you can see why some Websites do not work very well. You can learn how to make your Websites more professional.

- Does your Website lack navigational systems?
- Is your user interface design consistent?
- Is the user experience you are trying to create professional?
- Do you have broken links on your Website?
- Is your Web homepage informative?
- Did you follow The IA Model prior to implementation?

For further reading and study, I recommend these Websites:

- <http://ia institute.org>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_architecture

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Information Architecture & Design

Information Architecture, Usability, Web, Experience Design

Looking forward to working with you. And I would welcome the opportunity to bring my research, Information Architect, project manager and user experience design skills to your company. Other skills: Technical and professional writing, instructional design, strategic planning, e-learning, Web 2.0, and corporate training. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Expertise

- Research,
- Information architecture,
- User experience design,
- Navigational systems,
- Mapping and diagramming,
- Quality deliverables,
- Rapid prototyping,
- Design with user-centered principles in mind,
- Understand business requirements,
- Take into consideration what users need,
- Team leadership—project management skills,
- Card sorting,
- Heuristic evaluations, and
- Usability testing.