EDITORIAL
Stacy Merrill Surla
ICF Ironworks

Discipline and Resolution

Speaking of resolutions, Katriina Byström and the editorial board of the Journal of Information Architecture allowed me to fulfill one of my important life commitments when they invited me to join the publication as a peer reviewer back in 2009. It is my conviction that information architecture belongs both in the academy and in the world of practice. Information architecture is a *philosophy* – a way of understanding certain parts of our world (De Hubert-Miller, 2006). It is also a *craft* – a way practitioners can make parts of the world better, and create personal value for other people (Bowles, 2011). But an active dialogue between these two dimensions of information architecture has been strangely difficult to achieve.

Thank goodness for the vision and hard work of those who brought the Journal of Information Architecture into being four years ago, and who continue to foster it. Thank goodness for the academicians and practitioners who carry out IA research and step up to the challenge of writing scholarly articles that speak to both worlds. And thank goodness for the role of peer reviewer, which gives people like me a structured, manageable way to participate in this important work, even with a consuming work schedule and rich family life.

My involvement with exploring information architecture's hybrid of study and practice began when I attended a panel at the 2006 IA Summit called *"Setting the Agenda for IA Research"*. There Don Turnbull, Peter Morville, Jamie Bluestein, and Keith Instone commenced the attempt to draw practitioners into a discussion of what an academic dimension to information architecture would be. In 2009, Peter Morville once again brought the question to the ASIS&T IA Summit in a session called *"IA Practice and Research"*.

In the same year, the Research and Education Group in Information Architecture (REG-iA) group was formed, which led to the creation of the Journal of IA and the launching of its first issue. Continuing to bring the question to the world of practice, Keith Instone and Andrea Resmini discussed *"Bridging IA Research and Practice"* at the 2010 ASIS&T IA Summit and later on turned that conversation into an article for the *Bulletin of the ASIS&T* (Instone & Resmini, 2010). Among the conclusions from that session was that fixing the fracture between academic and applied information

architecture requires building long-term relationships between researchers and practitioners. This journal is a robust way this is being done.

I am certain the budding relationship between research and practice is a healthy and necessary one. The need goes beyond the desirable tangibles we are already seeing, such as improved curricula, increased salaries, and growing demand for information architects in both teaching and applied roles. This relationship must happen; it is right that it happen. There must be a keel of critical thought to bind the integrity of information architecture as a discipline.

This field was born of open dialogue amongst people doing information architecture without having a name for it yet (Surla, 2006). To enable the field to come into its own as a discipline, we must foster an ongoing challenging, critical, and creative conversation. This conversation must involve all the principals, including the practitioners, the academics, and the representatives of the many fields related to information architecture.

The *Journal of Information Architecture* provides us with a framework for this endeavor. Painstakingly, it is building up the theoretical foundations of information architecture as a discipline through both peer-approved papers and the practitioner-driven conversations these ignite. It is also giving us a way to discover the lines of inquiry that are being pursued in academia and in the field, while uncovering new lines that could fruitfully be opened up (Madsen, 2009).

It has taken a great deal of heavy lifting to bring this leviathan up to the surface.

As I recognize this, I'm brought back to my appreciation for the very existence of the Journal. I'm thankful for the opportunity to help further information architecture as a discipline, in a defined and practical way. When I review for the journal, I find an abundance of papers that sparkle with innovation, creativity, thoughtful riddles and thought-provoking answers. My resolution to continue in this role is the easiest one of all.

Stacy Merrill Surla

GUEST EDITOR

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IN THIS ISSUE

Issues 1 – 2, Volume 4, contain a guest editorial and four articles.

In her editorial, *"Discipline and Resolution"*, Stacy Merrill Surla discusses the elements of the ongoing process coalescing the field of information architecture into a discipline.

In *"Sense Making in Cross-channel Design"*, Jon Fisher, Simon Norris and Elizabeth Buie explore the early development of a practical framework for the creation of meaningful cross-channel information architectures.

Fredrik Ohlin, in his article *"The Role of Information Architecture in Context-aware Adaptive Systems"*, supports the application of information architecture to promote awareness and discovery of specific task-efficient measures for context-aware adaptive systems.

Koltay Tibor in his *"Information Architecture, Information Overload and the Literacies"* investigates the relationship between information architecture and information overload in the light of the benefits offered by new literacies.

Finally, Guglielmo Pescatore and Veronica Innocenti discuss the connection between new media, cross-channel design and information architecture in their article *"Information Architecture in Contemporary Television Series"*.