



Dorte Madsen

A Good Start

Editorial

Welcome to this third issue of the Journal of Information Architecture, Issue 1, Volume 2.

When we started planning the Journal in 2008 our initial goal was simply to take this much needed thing off the ground to see how it would fly. Now, after a little more than two years, I am happy to observe that the Journal has had a good start, it has attracted a lot of interest, and it has been well received by readers, by authors and by reviewers alike.

The numbers have been satisfying as well. The first week Issue 1 was available, we had more than 5,000 individual visits to the Journal's homepage and more than 3,000 PDF downloads.

The trend kept up for Issue 2, and the Journal has been widely tweeted, blogged and commented upon as well. We are certainly pleased you were pleased, and even happier to have this Spring 2010 Issue introduce a few long announced changes and improvements to the Journal.

First, we offer more options in terms of access to the articles: these can now be either downloaded in PDF format, as usual, or read online in full. This possibility is currently limited to the current Issue, but we will work our way back in time.

Second, to further encourage interaction with our readers, Volume 2, Issue 1 introduces comments. It is now possible to add your thoughts, notes and criticism to individual articles (again, for now just with this current issue), and actively participate into the debate. Or start it. We hope that our readers will embrace this new feature and look forward to many engaging conversations.

In This Issue

Issue 1, Volume 2, consists of three articles that span from the more technical approaches to information architecture to the more exploratory.

In his article "Topic Maps: From information to discourse architecture", Lars

Johnsen suggests how Topic Maps may function as a means of extending “information architecture” into “discourse architecture”.

Drawing on notions adapted from current discourse theory, his article focuses on the communicative, or explanatory, potential of topic maps. And he demonstrates and exemplifies how texture may be built into topic maps in order to make them more flexible for information and knowledge representation purposes. Discourse architecture and “discourse topic maps” may be seen as an effort to enhance findability as well as intelligibility using a common approach.

In their article “Beyond Findability: Search-Enhanced Information Architecture for Content-Intensive RIAs” Luigi Spagnolo, Davide Bolchini, Paolo Paolini and Nicoletta Di Blas introduce Search-Enhanced Information Architecture (SEE-IA), a coherent set of information Architecture design strategies.

The key ingredients of SEE-IA are a seamless combination of structured hypertext-based Information Architectures, faceted search paradigms, and RIA-enabled visualization techniques. SEE-IA focuses on specific group of RIAs: applications seamlessly integrating complex Information Architecture with search mechanisms and advanced interactive interfaces.

The paper elucidates and codifies these design strategies and their underlying principles, and also identifies how they support a set of requirements which are often neglected by most current design approaches. A case study of a complex RIA is used to illustrate the design strategies and to provide ready-to-use examples that can be transferred to other IA contexts and domains.

Finally, in their article “Maturing a Practice”, Jason Hobbs, Terence Fenn, and Andrea Resmini introduce practitioners and the fields of UX and IA at large to the basic concepts of practice-led research (PLR), and they ask “How can PLR improve information architecture and user experience design at large?”.

The article examines the field of user experience design (UXD) in general, and information architecture (IA) in particular, and the argument focuses on the role of research in the development of a discipline.

The process of maturing the community of practice to that of an institutionalized discipline is explored; it is suggested that a broad uptake of PLR by practicing user experience designers and information architects could assist in the generation of knowledge and discourse, and that this in turn could considerably assist in the maturing of the practice towards a

discipline.

PLR could assist in the creation of scientifically driven, research-based knowledge; provide practitioners with an approach to academic research; facilitate a supply and demand for a structure to emerge, helping progress UXD and IA from communities of practice to disciplines. A variety of limitations and threats to the field are the primary drivers behind writing this paper: the informal structures of a community of practice are limited in their ability to store and disseminate knowledge; the validation of knowledge is not rigorous; opinion and knowledge are often confused; communities of practice tend to be impermanent; there is a lack of real progress made in ongoing discourses (discussions are circular); and for the practitioner there is no larger coherent body of validated, scientific knowledge to appeal to or apply when designing in commercial or other contexts where the designer is accountable.

Final Notes

Thanks to you, our readers and authors who have trusted us with their work, the Journal of Information Architecture has had a good start.

This would not have been possible with some backstage work, though, so let me direct my sincerest appreciation to the people who make your contributions and this Journal possible.

When we started the Journal, we also started building the organization that was to take care of it, and this is gradually falling into place, piece by piece.

As our Associate Editors Byström, Pharo and Resmini described in their editorial “Open 24/7” in Volume 1, Issue 2, the Journal’s peer-review procedures are now effective.

Similarly our staff, Associate Editors, Editorial Board, Reviewers, and Editors, is consolidating and growing in numbers.

Thanks to all of you for your hard work and dedication.

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Editor-in-Chief

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