ReDesigning a Website Using IA Principals

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Frameworks
- Structuring, Organizing and Labeling
- Doing a Redesign
- Odds & Ends

What this Is Not

- How to create a website
- Detailed information on accessibility
- How to conduct usability tests & integrate results into a site
- Visual design
- How to install or use tools such as Drupal or Mediawiki
- Search engine optimization/metadata
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What is IA?
• Peter Morville & Louis Rosenfeld:
  • The art & science of shaping information products and experiences to support usability and findability

Why is it Important?
• You can’t have a site that meets the needs of all users without some structure
• Keeps stuff organized, usable, and findable
• Flexible and scalable
• Provides room for growth


**Why Library Websites?**

- We are the information people, but most librarians don’t understand IA
- Many bad examples
- We don’t allow chaotic shelves (well, we try...), so why not the same emphasis on our websites?

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**Share Time**

Name, title, institution, Vision

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**Frameworks**

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Accessibility & Usability

• Everything needs to be framed with these in mind

Context/Content/Users

• Need a balance of all three
• Be prepared to make decisions with these three in mind

Politics

Context

• Every site has a context
• Each library and site is unique
• IA should provide a values snapshot of your library
• What are the key tasks people need to do?
**Content**

- Who owns?
- Which formats?
- Structure
- Metadata/controlled vocabularies
- Volume
- Dynamism
- Tasks

**Users**

- Need to know and understand your users
- Define user groups
- Match user groups to tasks
- User research data
- Personas

**Politics**

- Need to understand your library’s politics
- Still must make decisions
- Politics are complex and make for a complex website
**Activity**

What is the context of your site?
What content is included?
Who are the users?
What are the key tasks?

**Structuring, Organizing, & Labeling**

**Purpose**

- Need to think about various aspects of the site:
  - Components
  - Dimensions
  - Boundaries
  - Unified presence is important
**Organization System**

- Need to figure out what is important to your audience
- Develop a workable system
- Don’t try to do too much

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**Organizational Structures**

- Flat structure diagram:

```
  /\  \\
 /   \\
/     \\
```

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**Organizational Structures**

- Hierarchical structure diagram:

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/\  \\
/   \\
/     \\
/       \\
/         \\
```

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**Organization Structures**

- No rules, but:
  - Don’t overload users with too many options
  - Group and structure information at the page level
  - Back up your structure with user testing

**Navigation Systems**

- One or more systems that help users navigate throughout your site
  - Needs to be flexible
  - Content that does not fit
  - Examples

**Navigation Types**

- Design or architecture?
- “You are here” indicators
- Should be site wide, but can be complemented locally
- Contextual navigation
- Graphics or text?
Activity:
How is your current site structured?
What navigation type?
How’s that working for you?

Search Systems

• Need a site search function
• Other searches
• Differentiating library search types

Search v. Browse

• Need to navigate and still have a search structure
• Users do expect to search, but do not let them rely on it
• Search is not a band aid for bad site design
**Labeling Systems**

- You need one
- Keep in mind how users speak, not librarians
- Should educate users about new concepts and help them identify them
- Labeling is an art, not a science

**Types of Labels**

- Contextual
- Headings
- Navigation choices
- Index terms

**Come up with 25 different content labels for your site**
**Site Maps & Indexes**

- Use to reinforce hierarchy so users understand how things are organized
- Don’t let it get overwhelming; need to make choices on granularity
- Complex sites should have both
- Show how things are related to one another

**Metadata, Thesauri, etc.**

- Can be useful, but can be a big pain

**Activity**

1. Where am I?
2. What am I looking for; how do I search it?
3. How to I get around this site?
4. Who uses this site?
5. What is important and Unique about this organization? What are it’s values?
6. What services are available?
7. How can I contact a person?
8. Where is it located?
What is the ideal organization scheme for your library?

Chunking

- Defining chunks
- Ways to break up chunks
- Chunking areas
- Aids in navigation and structure

Post It Notes
Actually going through a Redesign

Process of IA

- Research
- Strategy
- Design
- Implementation
- Implementation

When to do It

- When your current structure is no longer flexible to your needs
- Ideally, your structure will outlive your design
- When technology profoundly changes
- Incrementally
Research

- Lots of meetings with various stakeholder groups to get buy in
- Assess the technology and skills that you have available
- Do background research now so you don’t second guess later

Research

- Need balance with organizational:
  - Goals
  - Mission
  - Politics
  - Human resources
  - Institutional control

Background Questions

- Where is this library headed?
- What is the culture?
- What resources does this library value?
- Why will people come to the Site? Why will they come back?
- Who are the audiences?
- What types of tasks should users be able to perform?
- What is the technical infrastructure?
- What worked in the past? What didn’t?
**Strategy**

- A contextual understanding forms the foundation of an IA strategy
- Provides high level recommendations of IA administration, technology integration, structure emphasis, organization & labeling systems, document types, and navigation
- But it isn’t set in stone

**Developing Strategy**

- What works for you & your library
  - Think
  - Articulate
  - Communicate
  - Test
- IA Strategy Report, Presentation, Project Plan for Design

**Strategy Deliverables**

- Create metaphors
- Develop scenarios
- Blueprints
- Wireframes
Strategy Report

• Executive summary
• Audience, mission, and vision for the site, including vocabulary
• Lessons learned from research
• Architectural strategies & approaches—define rules, roles, resources, templates
• Project plan
• Market it like hell

Design and Documentation

• Where you take your higher level strategy and create blueprints, wireframes, metadata, and other tools that will be utilized by programmers, content authors, etc. throughout production

Design & Documentation

• You need to produce several views of your IA for various stakeholder groups
• Recognize that you cannot please everyone
• Present IA in person, answer questions
• Diagramming (Gliffy)
**Blueprints/Site Maps**

- Map of your site
- Show relationships between pages and other content components
- Focus on specifics, not everything
- Can make them more detailed later

**Wireframes/Paper Prototyping**

- Depict how an individual page or template should look like from an architectural perspective
- Helps you to group components, how to order them, and what has priority
- Shows basic organization
- Design starts coming into play

**Content Mapping/Inventory**

- Spreadsheets
- Group content together and create a blueprint of how things will be
- Also shows how things will be moved
**Content Models**

• Things that don’t have a context in the site
• IMPORTANT--They need a home and you need to create that using various methods

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**The Rest...**

• Sketch out design, prototype...
• Things get interesting
• Be ready to compromise
• Plan for the future
• Broadcast deliverables

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**The Rest...**

• Arranging Information
• Implementation
• Administration
Odds & Ends

Home Pages

• Identify the site, establish the brand
• Set the tone and personality of the site
• Allows people to do something right away
• Should reflect personality of the library

Pathway Pages

• Gateway pages to secondary content
• Great for categories of stuff you can’t put on the homepage
• An additional way to navigate
**Finding Stuff**

- There should be five ways of finding anything in your site:
  - Search
  - Site Map or Index
  - Pathways, browsing, etc.
  - But...ease of finding them is better than multiple ways of finding

**URLS**

- They’ve lost their purpose
- It can be used as breadcrumbs
- Length & Organization
- Index pages
- lowercase letters
- Naming conventions/labeling

**Folders**

- lowercase
- Short--less than 10 letters
- Should represent broad topic areas & fit with navigation
- index pages can be your pathfinder pages
Scrolling

• So many answers
• Don’t scroll on homepage or pathway pages
• Other pages, scrolling is OK but be reasoned

Writing

• People read in an “F” pattern
• Break it up—blocks of text are boring
• Bullet points are best
• Active voice
• Don’t Rehash the same thing over and over

Page Creep

• Don’t allow similar pages to be written: create one good page instead
• Each page has a purpose
• Each page has a home
Tutorials/Guides/Whatever Else

- Why do we have so many names?
- Pick one, or define them all

Accessibility

- Every page has a title field
- Each link meaningful and discrete (no “click here”)
- All images have descriptions
- Bulleted lists are lists
- Tables only for tabled content

Conclusion

- IA is an art and a science
- There are no right answers
- Trust your instinct
- Take risks and trust your intuition
- It is just a website, no one is going to die
ASSESSMENT

- http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7HJTS26